DIVERSIFYING FEMINISM IN TURKEY IN THE 1990S

A Master's Thesis

by

METİN YÜKSEL

Department of
Political Science and Public Administration
Bilkent University
Ankara
September 2003

To my mother Hasibe Yüksel
and my older sister Rakia

DIVERSIFYING FEMINISM IN TURKEY IN THE 1990S

The Institute of Economics and Social Sciences
of
Bilkent University

by

METİN YÜKSEL

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

in

THE DEPARTMENT OF
POLITICAL SCIENCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
BİLKENT UNIVERSITY
ANKARA

September 2003

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Political Science and Public Administration.

……
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tahire Erman
Supervisor

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Political Science and Public Administration.

……
Assist. Prof. Alev Çınar
Examining Committee Member

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Political Science and Public Administration.

……
Assist. Prof. Dr. Helga Rittersberger-Tılıç
Examining Committee Member

Approval of the Institute of Economics and Social Sciences

……
Prof. Dr. Kürşat Aydoğan
Director

ABSTRACT

DIVERSIFYING FEMINISM IN TURKEY IN THE 1990S

Metin Yüksel

M.A., Department of Political Science and Public Administration

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tahire Erman

September 2003

This thesis attempts to diversify feminism in Turkey with a particular reference to Kurdish women's relationship with the feminist movement in Turkey in the 1990s. The thesis argues that feminism in Turkey, to a large extent, has been ethnicity-blind as it has been implicitly assumed that all women in Turkey are of Turkish ethnic origin. Yet it is claimed that, of a different ethnic origin, Kurdish women undergo a dual oppression and subordination due both to their gender and ethnic origin. In this context, a relationship will be constructed between Black women's experience in the West and that of Kurdish women in Turkey. These arguments will be based on a review of the relevant literature in addition to in-depth interviews carried out with nine politically active Kurdish women.

Furthermore, it will be argued that Kurdish women's political activism in the 1990s' Turkey as 'Kurdish women' emanates from the fact that they were not recognized as

‘Kurdish’ women by the feminist movement on the one hand, and not as ‘women’ by Kurdish nationalism on the other. Despite these drawbacks of the two movements under consideration, it will be indicated that, Kurdish women’s political activism might be considered as a consequence of the configuration of these two movements. Moreover, this thesis argues that, among the many strands of the feminist theories, Black feminism has important insights in understanding and explaining the specific form of oppression and subordination of Kurdish women in Turkey.

Key Words: Feminism, Ethnicity, Difference, Kurdish women, Turkey, the 1990s.

ÖZET

1990'LARDA TÜRKİYE'DE FEMİNİZMİ FARKLANDIRMAK

Metin Yüksel

Master, Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi Bölümü

Tez Yöneticisi: Doç. Dr. Tahire Erman

Eylül 2003

Bu tez, Kürt kadınların Türkiye'deki feminist hareketle ilişkilerine referansla 1990'larda Türkiye'de feminizmi farklandırmaya girişmektedir. Bu tez, Türkiye'deki feminizmin, Türkiye'deki tüm kadınların Türk etnik kökenine sahip oldukları varsayımı dolayısıyla büyük oranda etnik bir körlük içinde olageldiğini tartışmaktadır. Ancak farklı bir etnik kökene sahip olan Kürt kadınların, hem toplumsal cinsiyetleri ve hem de etnik kökenleri dolayısıyla ikili bir ezilme ve altasıralanmaya katlandıkları iddia edilmektedir. Bu bağlamda Batıdaki siyah kadınların deneyimleri ile Türkiye'deki Kürt kadınların deneyimleri arasında bir ilişki kurulacaktır. Bu iddialar ilgili literatürün taranmasına ve dokuz Kürt kadınla gerçekleştirilen derinlemesine mülakatlara dayandırılmaktadır.

Ayrıca Kürt kadınların, ‘Kürt kadınlar’ olarak 1990’lar Türkiye’sindeki politik hareketliliğinin bir yandan feminist hareket tarafından ‘Kürt’ kadınlar olarak, öte yandan Kürt milliyetçiliği tarafından da ‘kadın’ olarak tanınmamalarından kaynaklandığı iddia edilmektedir. Sözkonusu iki hareketin bu eksikliklerine rağmen, Kürt kadınların politik hareketliliğinin, bu iki hareketin konfigürasyonunun bir sonucu olarak düşünülebileceği belirtilmektedir. Buna ek olarak, bu tez feminist teoriler dizisi arasından Siyah feminizmin, Türkiye’de Kürt kadınların özgül ezilme ve altasıralanma biçimlerini anlamada ve açıklamada önemli içgörüler barındırdığını iddia etmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Feminizm, Etnisite, Fark, Kürt kadınlar, Türkiye, 1990lar.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Starting with the formulation of its research map until its submission, this thesis is the product of a considerably long process in which very many people have had their shares and contributions. Thus I consider it my duty to mention their names one by one. I should thank my supervisor Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tahire Erman for her support, encouragement and contributions from the beginning of the writing process. I also thank Assist. Prof. Dr. Alev Çınar and Assist. Prof. Dr. Helga Rittersberger-Tılıç who read my thesis and put forward important comments and suggestions.

Prof. Dr. Feride Acar, Prof. Dr. Chris Corrin, Prof. Dr. Yakın Ertürk and Assist. Prof. Dr. Fahriye Üstüner helped me formulate the research proposal and methodology of the thesis. Dr. Shahrzad Mojab sent me her writings on Kurdish women, which were inspiring for me. Aksu Bora, Nazik Işık and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mesut Yeğen read some parts of the thesis and provided me with valuable feedbacks. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Yıldız Ecevit's course "Contemporary Feminist Theory" played an important role in the conceptual and theoretical body of the thesis. Assist. Prof. Dr. Serpil Çakır made valuable comments on an older version of the section of Ottoman women's movement. Zelal Ayman made notable comments on the main argument of the thesis. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Serpil Sancar sent me the outline of the course she taught at Ankara University. Necla Açık, Handan Çağlayan, Asena Günal and Şule

Toktaş helped me get in contact with the women with whom I would interview. Thanks to Zeynep Kutluata and the employees of Women's Library and Information Center, I could reach Kurdish women's and Ottoman women's journals so easily. Alper and Birivan provided me with valuable logistic supplies in the process of writing the thesis.

I must, one by one, thank the nine Kurdish women who participated in this study. Without their sharing with me their invaluable experiences, undoubtedly this thesis could never come into existence.

Last but not least, I am deeply grateful to my family for their continuous support and belief in me. At this point I should particularly mention my dear older brother Mazhar who has always been encouraging, inspiring and mind-broadening for me throughout my studies.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT……...…iii

ÖZET…….....v

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS……... ….vii

TABLE OF CONTENTS .....…..ix

INTRODUCTION .....…...1

CHAPTER I: FEMINISM AND THE QUESTION OF DIFFERENCE…….…….....5

1.1. Feminism: A Conceptual Introduction…….……5

1.2. The Concept of Difference…….……..8

1.3. A Challenging Critique of Mainstream Feminism…….10

1.4. Black Feminism and the Question of Difference Among Women……....15

CHAPTER II: FEMINISM AND THE KURDISH QUESTION IN TURKEY……..25

2.1. A Historical Overview of Feminism in Turkey.....25

2.1.1. Ottoman Women's Movement.....26

2.1.2. The Period from the Proclamation of the Turkish Republic in1923 to the 1980s.....35

2.1.3. The Feminist Movement in Turkey in the 1980s and 1990s.....39

2.2. The Kurdish Question in Turkey……...…53

2.2.1. A Conceptual Framework: Ethnicity, Nation and Nationalism....53

2.2.2. The Context of the Kurdish Question.....57

2.3. Engendering the Kurdish Question in Turkey.....65

CHAPTER III: A FIELD RESEARCH ON KURDISH WOMEN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH FEMINISM IN TURKEY IN THE 1990S.....70

3.1. Methodology.....70

3.2. Analysis of the Data.....72

3.2.1. Kurdish Women's Positioning vis-a-vis Feminism and the Feminist Movement in Turkey.....77

3.2.2. Kurdish Women's Positioning vis-a-vis Nationalism and Kurdish Nationalism.....94

3.2.3. The Specificity/Difference of Kurdish Women's Experiences.....104

CONCLUSION 111

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY.....115

APPENDIX A.....124

APPENDIX B.....131

INTRODUCTION

Although the history of women's movement in Turkey can be traced back to the late Ottoman Empire, the emergence and development of a radical and autonomous feminist movement was seen in the 1980s. Throughout this decade women openly defined themselves as feminists. They got together in consciousness-raising groups so as to discuss their oppression and subordination in the family and society at large. They marched in the protests for the first time for themselves. They problematized and opposed the violence that women were undergoing. In the 1990s, on the other hand, the period of the institutionalization of the feminist movement was witnessed. In a number of universities research centers on women and graduate programs of women's studies were established. Moreover, a variety of civil societal organizations that were concerned with the immediate improvement and/or enhancement of the life conditions of women were founded.

Bearing in mind the above-mentioned accomplishments of the feminist movement in Turkey, however, this thesis takes one particular deficiency of feminism in Turkey as its point of departure. With a specific attention on the relationship of Kurdish women with feminism in addition to their rather specific/different set of experiences, this thesis argues that feminism in Turkey to a large extent has been ethnicity-blind. In other words, ill sided with the implicit assumption that all women in Turkey are of Turkish ethnic origin, feminism in Turkey disregarded, overlooked, sidelined and/or wrote out the existence and difference of Kurdish women's experience of oppression and subordination.

Undoubtedly, this basic argument will not be put forward in the form of a naïve anachronism as it will also be pointed out that, while raising such a criticism against

the feminist research and movement in Turkey, one should not fail to take the specific social and historical circumstances into consideration. Having put such a reservation and giving relatively recent examples from the present feminist research and women's studies programs in addition to the experiences of the politically active Kurdish women, it will be asserted that feminism in Turkey occluded Kurdish women's experience either under the categories of 'eastern/rural' women, or 'tribal' women or under the very general category 'womanhood' rather than seeing them as 'Kurdish women'. These specifications, as it will be seen, are derived from a review of the feminist scholarship in Turkey and from the field research of this thesis.

The proceeding of the thesis is as follows: In the first chapter, following a conceptual introduction to feminism and 'difference', Black feminist thought and activism is examined in the comprehensive context of the question of difference among women. After an elaboration on Black feminism, in this chapter, there is an attempt to search for the possibility of constructing a relationship between Black women and in this context, the question of whether Kurdish women are the Black women of Turkey will be discussed.

The second chapter is composed of two sections. In the first section a detailed historical account of feminism in Turkey is made. This is done through three historical periodizations. The first is women's movement in the Ottoman Empire. The second period stretches from the foundation of the Republic to the 1980s and the third phase includes the 1980s up until today. After the historical overview of feminism in Turkey, a critique of the movement is developed on the basis of the argument that feminism in Turkey did not clash with the State and thus, avoided seeing the Kurdish question in general and, more vehemently, the Kurdish woman question in particular. In the second section of this chapter, also the Kurdish question

in Turkey is cast an eye on, with a critical one. Historically, it is shown that there are two very important phases in the evolution of the Kurdish question in Turkey. While the establishment of the Republic was the first critical moment since, with this process, nation and nation-state building policies were started to be put into effect; the post-1980 was that of the second primarily because Kurdish nationalism was at its peak in these two decades. Conceptual clarifications on ethnicity, nation and nationalism are made before going into the analysis of the Kurdish question. Furthermore, in this section there is an attempt of developing a critique of the dominant literature concerning the Kurdish question as well as that of Kurdish nationalism regarding its approach to women.

The third chapter presents the original findings of this thesis, which are based on the in-depth interviews conducted with nine politically active Kurdish women. The analysis of the findings pursues three issues. While the first is the relationship of Kurdish women with feminism and the feminist movement in Turkey, the second one is their relationship with nationalism and Kurdish (nationalist) movement. The third one, on the other hand, reveals the specificity/difference of Kurdish womanhood experience. In order to precisely position these lines, four categories are identified within which Kurdish women in this study can be fitted. These categories are non-feminist, feminist nationalist, Kurdish feminist and feminist. As it will be seen, these categorizations are made on the basis of their self-identifications in addition to the overall consistence of their answers particularly in regards to the first two issues of the three that were mentioned above.

Finally, in the conclusion part of the thesis, following an overall evaluation of what has been said so far, an attempt is made of how to read Kurdish women's political activism on the basis of their relationship with feminism in Turkey in the

1990s. In this context, it is offered that Kurdish women's involvement in politics as 'Kurdish women' is, to a significant extent, the outcome of the configuration of two dominant social and political phenomena, namely Kurdish nationalism and 'Turkish' feminism. Therefore, it is argued that, despite the predominant opposition, which Kurdish women raise against Kurdish nationalism and feminism in Turkey, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that their immediate political activism as Kurdish women in the 1990s is a consequence of both the positive and negative contributions of these two forces.

This thesis concerns itself solely with the two predominant factors that pave the way to the oppression and subordination of Kurdish women. These are ethnicity and gender. Yet such restricted focus should not be taken to mean that Kurdish women are oppressed and subordinated merely in terms of gender and ethnicity. Thus, one might point out that class analysis of their oppression and subordination is not examined within the scope of this thesis.

If the lack of class analysis is one deficiency/weakness of this thesis, another one, it should be confessed, is that it did not include Kurdish women activists in the women's in the organizations in the mostly Kurdish-populated Eastern and Southeastern regions of Turkey, some examples of which are *Ka-Mer*[1] (Women's Centre in Diyarbakır) and *Van Kadın İnisiyatifi* (Van Woman Initiative). Though these and the like organizations are playing quite significant roles with their activities in terms of the improvement of the lives of Kurdish women, due to limitations of time these organizations have not been able to incorporated into the scope of this study.

[1] For more on the activities of Ka-Mer *see* Akkoç (2002).

CHAPTER I

FEMINISM AND THE QUESTION OF DIFFERENCE

1.1. Feminism: A Conceptual Introduction

Feminism is both a theory and a movement. While at the theoretical level it concerns itself with the analysis of the oppression and subordination of women, at the level of the movement it is a commitment to overcome the oppression and subordination women experience. In fact, to speak of feminism as 'a theory' might not accurately reflect its full picture, as there is not a unified and/or homogeneous feminist theory as such. On the contrary, there is a heterogeneous set of feminist theories. In this context, the strands of feminist theory can be named as liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, radical feminism, psychoanalytic feminism, existentialist feminism, postmodern feminism (Tong, 1992), Black feminism (Hooks, 1992, 2000; Carby, 1997; Collins, 1998, 2000, 2001; King, 1997; Amos and Parmar, 2001; Corrin, 1999) and ecofeminism (Mies and Shiva, 1993; Warren, 1997). Although the oppression and subordination of women is the continuous line that can be found in each of these strands, they differ from each other in terms of their conceptualizations as well as offers of solutions in order to overcome the oppressive relations that women undergo. To illustrate, while a liberal feminist places the emphasis upon women's getting equality with men in legal and political terms (Whelehan, 1995), a Marxist feminist argues that it is the class that in the last instance better accounts for the women's oppression and subordination (Tong, 1992)

and for a socialist feminist it is the simultaneous impact of class and gender by means of which women's oppression can best be explained (Tong, 1992). Despite the wide range of its varieties, as "a critical form of consciousness" (Ramazanoğlu, 1989: 140), feminism can be depicted as "a social and political movement to undo patriarchal domination of women" (Farganis, 1994: 15).

Although feminism occupies a significant place in terms of its contribution to both social and political theory to the extent that it can best be pictured as "a paradigm shift" (Stacey and Thorne, 1998: 222; Evans, 1983: 227) primarily because it provides one with a radical "reevaluation of the political, ontological and epistemological commitments underlying patriarchal discourses as well as their theoretical contents" (Gross, 1986: 192), still it is possible to state that it is not totally free of certain theoretical as well as practical problems. In this context, the question of difference comes to the fore as the most difficult one to deal with in feminist theory, particularly in terms of finding a common ground for the formulation of a feminist politics. What are these differences that divide women further and further? They are class, power, work, race, nationality, ethnicity, culture, ideology and sexuality (Ramazanoğlu, 1989). In fact, following Yuval-Davis (1997), it is possible to argue that women are even further divided from each other according to their specific social and historical positions and positionings. What makes the question of difference rather a difficult task basically emanates from the fact that there is not a unitary womanhood category, which it is not easy to speak of. As Stanley and Wise put it:

> A defining assumption of feminism is that 'woman' is a necessary and valid category because all women share, by virtue of being women, a set of common experiences. These shared experiences derive, not causally from supposed 'biological facts' but women's common experience of oppression. That is,

> 'woman' is a socially and politically constructed category, the ontological basis of which lies in a set of experiences rooted in the material world.
> However, to say that women share 'experiences of oppression' is not to say that we share the *same* experiences. The social contexts within which different kinds of women live, work, struggle and make sense of their lives differ widely across the world and between different groupings of women (Stanley and Wise, 1990: 21-22).

Having the question of difference as its encompassing framework in general, this chapter in particular is concerned with the question of 'race' in the context of Black feminism as was experienced in the West. In this sense, it will concentrate on how the experiences of Black women in America and Britain were shaped under the predominant and simultaneous impacts of race, gender and class. This chapter of my thesis could best be appreciated if it is read not as a historical examination of Black feminist thought and activism but rather as an attentive analysis of what is crystallized in Black feminist thought and activism.

In fact, as this chapter will make it clear, the oppression and subordination of Black women was not only determined by racist and sexist patriarchal biases but class-based ones were also important in this process. Therefore, in the following body of this chapter, I will attempt to make an illustration of the intersection/multiplicity of their oppression, which further contributed to the peripheralisation of their status vis-à-vis their White counterparts in the United States. However, before going into the analysis of Black feminism, I will elaborate on the concept of 'difference'. In the conclusion part of the chapter, I will try to arrive at the answers of the questions that I posed at the end of the previous paragraph, that is, the answer of whether women can find unity through diversity will be sought for. Finally, I will finish this chapter by putting forth the question of to what extent it is possible to speak of Kurdish women in Turkey as 'Black women' of

Turkey particularly by leaning upon the conceptual and theoretical frame of Black feminism that is provided.

1.2. The Concept of Difference

It is time to ask the question of what 'difference' means and to seek its answer. It seems possible to define 'difference' as the particularity of an individual or a social group that is not considered to conform to the dominant and/or hegemonic norm in a specific society at a specific historical moment. Put differently, in order for an individual or a social group to be considered as different, they must have a different set of values, traditions and/or 'voice' from the dominant ones within the social formation they happen to live. As Phillips points out, for the ones who regard diversity as a positive feature and embrace it, the difference is:

> Not the differences of opinion that lead one person to vote Labour and another Conservative, nor indeed the differences of class location that place one group in conflict with another, but the seemingly *intractable differences of experience, values or cultural practices* that get in the way of our mutual comprehension (Phillips, 2001: 442) (Italics added).

Though at first glance the delineation of difference seems quite understandable and easy to manage, once one gets into its various definitions, s/he sees that it is hard to draw certain boundaries for the concept of difference which seems to have disrespect for the boundaries. Yet I believe that it is still possible to convert this disrespect to a *healthy* one. The quotation above, for instance, is a good example in this sense. Particularly the criterion *intractability* gives us some clues for the recognition of difference. In this context, one should not be expected to be stripped of his/her values, cultural practices, and language and so on since whatever intractable

characteristics he/she thinks that make him/her up, should be considered to be within the boundaries of difference.

Certainly, it is important to note here that as defined in the discourses of the politics of difference, the difference has an envalued/positive meaning. There is not a hierarchical positioning between the differences recognized. That is to say, there is not an oppression-domination relationship between the differences. The emphasis I put on the fact that the politics of difference celebrates difference is due to the fact that difference has not always had a positive meaning throughout the history of social and political thought. To illustrate, in Ancient Greek difference meant inferiority/deficiency:

> Aristotle's political theory is a consistent part of his anthropology which takes the free adult male (roughly equivalent to the Athenian citizen) as the paradigm of human nature. Thus, the question 'What is man?' (where the term 'man', *anthropos*, claims to stand for humankind), Aristotle replies by focusing on the free adult male and stating that 'man is a rational animal' and, *ipso facto*, 'a political animal'. Once man, the full essence of human being, is held to correspond to the free adult male, other human beings who differ from him will be defined in terms of their various differences, which are regarded as marks of deficiency or inferiority. Thus, we have women, who are sexually different by virtue of being unfree and consequently inferior…(Cavarero, 1992: 32-33).

As it can be seen, difference was not always positively dealt with in the history of social and political thought from its much known beginning until recently. Weedon gives us a more recent example of the exclusionary characteristic of difference:

> *Discourses of human rights for a long time excluded anyone who was not white, male and middle-class and affirmed particular meanings and values as universal. Excluded groups have had to fight for centuries for inclusion within the liberal humanist project of liberty and equality* (Weedon, 1999: 179) (italics added).

Black feminism radically challenged such exclusion of difference. As an illustrative moment of difference, Black women struggled for the recognition of their difference

from white women. Thus, it can be argued that Black women played an important role in opening the way for the celebration of difference, which is elaborated below.

1.3 A Challenging Critique of Mainstream Feminism

The Black feminist critique of mainstream feminism arises in the context of the question of difference, specifically that of race. Therefore, one should give the conceptualization of race before going into the analysis of Black feminism. Cornell and Hartmann provide us with the definition of race as follows:

> We can define a race, then, as a human group defined by itself or others as distinct by virtue of perceived common physical characteristics that are held to be inherent. A race is a group of human beings socially defined on the basis of physical characteristics. Determining which characteristics constitute the race – the selection of markers and therefore the construction of the racial category itself- is a choice human beings make. Neither markers nor categories are predetermined by any biological factors (Cornell and Hartmann, 1998: 24).

The important point here is that despite the underlying biological factors, that is to say, the inherent physical characteristics, race is, like nation and nationalism, which will be examined in the second chapter, is a social construct. The particular physical characteristic coming to the fore in the context of Black women is the colour of the skin.

What is the point of departure in the Black feminist thought? It is the fact that historically speaking, Black women's experiences have been overlooked and/or ignored in much of the feminist analysis. For example, Hooks in a quite striking way illustrates how the experiences of Black women were not recognized and how they were simply omitted:

> We are rarely recognized as a group separate and distinct from black men, or as a present part of "women" in this culture…When black people are talked about the focus tends to be on black *men*, and when women are talked about the focus tends to be on *white* women. No where is this more evident than in the vast body of feminist literature (Hooks, 1992: 7).

By pointing out to the significance of the question of "Which women?", Corrin concisely states that the experiences that were talked of in the feminist literature were of a partial kind:

> In concentrating on white, often middle-class, heterosexual, non-disabled women's lives, and generalizing from such experiences, *feminist criticism of women's oppression was developing in a particular bubble*. It was apparently difficult for White feminists who were coming to consciousness of their own oppression, to recognize that their *partial* analyses were in fact denying the realities of many women's lives.
> *In highlighting their own experience as central, White feminists were sidelining or writing out the experience of women of color so that everything that was 'not White' became 'different'* (Corrin, 1999: 104) (Italics added).

Corrin seems to be raising very serious questions about the formulation of 'difference' in feminist theory and movement. Why the Black is considered to be different rather than the white? Does it necessarily imply that we are taking the white experience as the 'yardstick'? This has to do with the original experience of feminist theory and movement in its historical development process. As White women initially put feminist ideas and actions forward, Black women came to be labelled as different. Another way of saying is that the questions of difference in feminism, as enunciated in this thesis, should not be thought to be taking the white as the norm but rather as the extensions of the feminist theory from its starting point to various segments of women who are divided by class, race, nationality, ethnicity, ideology, culture, sexuality and ability lines.

The development of feminism involved an exclusionary understanding, whose basic norm is the White woman. As Spelman indicates: "Much of feminist theory has

reflected and contributed to what Adrienne Rich called 'white solipsism': the tendency 'to think, imagine and speak as if whiteness described the world'" (Spelman, 2001: 75). 'White solipsism' has not restricted itself merely by assuming the whiteness as the very norm, but, as Williams indicates, it designated the non-white/colored races by the term 'problem' (*cited in* Collins, 2000: 3). Furthermore blackness made the non-white a perpetual outsider (Collins, 2000: 11). Hooks also provides us with a succinct analysis of the second-wave of feminism in the United States, which further perpetuated racist as well as sexist prejudices:

> *That American women, irrespective of their education, economic status, or racial identification, have undergone years of sexist and racist socialization that has thought us to blindly trust our knowledge of history and its effect on present reality, even though that knowledge has been formed and shaped by an oppressive system, is nowhere more evident than in the recent feminist movement*…As they attempted to take feminism beyond the realm of radical rhetoric and into the realm of American life, they revealed that they had not changed, had not undone the sexist and racist brainwashing that had thought them to regard women unlike themselves as Others (Hooks, 1992: 121) (italics added).

White women were, as it can be seen, under the strong influence of the white supremacist ideology of the time. Their racism was so influential that in their feminist organizations discrimination against African American women reformers, as Rosalyn Tenborg-Penn points out, was the rule rather than the exception (*cited in* Gordon, 1987: 34). In a parallel vein, Hooks argues that feminism has been a bourgeois ideology in the United States and that: "White feminists act as if black women did not know sexist oppression existed until they voiced feminist sentiment. They believe they are providing black women with "the" analysis and "the" program for liberation" (Hooks, 2000: 140). In fact the case was no different in Britain. White middle-class feminists in Britain have put their partial experiences as the norm and they ignored day-to-day experiences of Black women (Amos and Parmar, 2001: 17-

19). It is quite striking that even when Black women were the subject at hand, they were taken to be "the 'subjects' for 'interesting' and 'exotic' comparison" (Amos and Parmar, 2001: 19). The white supremacist ideological discourse on 'race' in the minds of white feminists was so obvious that Black women were considered to be the objects:

> *They make us the objects of their privileged discourse on race. As "objects", we remain unequals, inferiors*. Even though they may be sincerely concerned about racism, their methodology suggests they are not yet free of the type of paternalism endemic to white supremacist ideology. Some of these women place themselves in the position of "authorities" who must mediate communication between racist white women (naturally they see themselves as having come to terms with their racism) and angry black women whom they believe are incapable of rational discourse (Hooks, 2000: 142) (italics added).

These are quite crucial critiques directed at the mainstream white feminism. One important point to be suggested here is the fact that when we look at the experiences of Black women, which have been ignored, marginalized and/or omitted from the white mainstream feminist agenda, we should take them in their relationship with those of White women, rather than taking the two sets of experiences as two oppositional categories. As Brown puts it:

> We need to recognize not only differences but also the relational nature of these differences…The overwhelming tendency now, it appears to me, is to acknowledge and then ignore differences among women. Or, if we acknowledge a relationship between Black and White women's lives, it is likely to be only that African American women's lives are shaped by white women's but not the reverse. The effect of this is that acknowledging difference becomes a way of reinforcing the notion that the experiences of white middle-class women are the norm; all others become deviant- different from (Brown, 1995: 42-43).

Brah, too, points out to the need of addressing the questions of inequality between Black and white women with a focus on both parts of the unequal relationship:

> Discussions about feminism and racism often center on the oppression of black women rather than exploring how both black and white women's gender is constructed through class and racism. This means that white women's

> 'privileged position' within racialised discourses fails to be adequately theorized, and processes of domination remain invisible (Brah, 1997: 109-110).

It is possible to exemplify the necessity of thinking on Black womanhood experience in its relationality with that of White womanhood in the following way: how far is it sufficient to reach a satisfactory picture of the oppression and subordination of women by solely focusing upon the experiences of women, without also taking the patriarchal constructions of manhood into account? This viewpoint would provide us only with the half of the story. Yet one should not go too far in this line of thinking. The basic historical reality that women in general and Black women in particular have experienced oppression and subordination in their specific social and historical circumstances should not be forgotten. Put differently, although "thinking nonlinearly and asymmetrically is essential to our intellectual and political developments" (Brown, 1995: 48), we should not lose sight of the fact that Black women in particular and women in general have been the oppressed and subordinated ones in their relationship with White women and men, respectively. That white and Black women stand in an unequal relationship should not be forgotten for the sake of the relational analysis of their standpoints. Carby succinctly points out to this situation:

> Black feminists have been, and are still, demanding that the existence of racism must be acknowledged as a structuring feature of our relationships with white women. *Both white feminist theory and practice have to recognize that white women stand in a power relation as oppressors of black women* (Carby, 1997: 46) (Italics added).

1.4 Black Feminism and the Question of Difference among Women

Having presented the major criticisms raised against the White mainstream feminism, now I would like to continue with the characterization of Black women's *sui generis* standpoint. First of all, it should be noted that it does not seem that easy to analyze the relationship between race and gender without taking class into account as well and then the effects of each of them on one another. Therefore, an examination of Black women solely in terms of race and gender seems to be simplistic, naïve and reductionist. An analysis of the experience of Black women should not and cannot be stripped of class as the other important analytical conceptual tool. Furthermore, one can see that besides race, gender and class as analytical categories to understand Black feminist standpoint, sexuality is another important tool that influenced Black feminist theory and activism. As Taylor indicates, lesbians were important to the extent that:

> The most pronounced group of Black women that continued to struggle in a collective fashion around feminist issues were largely lesbians. Their identity as lesbians made them more aware of heterosexuality as an institution and the need to critique patriarchy. African American women mobilized around homophobic issues during this period [i.e. the second wave] when many in the Black community were condemning homosexuality as immoral (Taylor, 1998: 8).

As it can be seen, the specificity of Black women's positions and/or oppressions is that they are multiply oppressed due to the fact that they are the embodiments of silenced standpoints. Yet the dangerous problem arising here is that one should not be entrapped within the assumption that Black women experience these forms of oppressions in autonomous, independent and separate ways. On the contrary, they are shaping the experiences of Black women in an interdependent and

interactive way. That is why King calls Black women's oppression as a multiple jeopardy rather than a double one:

> Unfortunately, most applications of the concepts of double and triple jeopardy have been overly simplistic in assuming that the relationships among the various discriminations are merely additive. These relationships are interpreted as equivalent to the mathematical equation, racism plus sexism plus classism equals triple jeopardy. In this instance, each discrimination has a single, direct and independent effect on status, wherein the relative contribution of each is readily apparent. This simple incremental process does not represent the nature of black women's oppression but rather, I would contend, leads to nonproductive assertions that one factor can and should supplant the other. For example, class oppression is the largest component of black women's subordinate status; therefore the exclusive focus should be on economics. Such assertions ignore the fact that racism, sexism and classism constitute three, interdependent control systems. *An interactive model, which I have termed multiple jeopardy, better captures those processes* (King, 1997: 222) (Italics added).

I agree with King's insightful analysis of Black women's experiences primarily because she warns us against a compartmentalized examination of such an overlapping/intermeshing experience of oppression and discrimination. In fact, that is exactly what makes such an analysis multiply difficult. The difficulty originates from the fact that Black women are not the bearers of Blackness at one particular moment, while those of womanhood at another one. On the contrary, their everyday life experiences are always shaped and determined under the mutual/interactive interplays of their intersectional/interlocking standpoint. In a parallel manner, Acker provides us with a notable observation concerning Black women's standpoint. I do not agree with her use of the title: "*The Emergence of Triple Oppression: Class, Race and Gender*" (Acker, 1999: 50). That is because, as I elaborated above with specific reference to King, triple oppression does not seem to give the rather complex picture of the reality of Black women, although they are still the important analytical conceptual tools in the analysis of Black women's experiences. Yet Acker's important observation is as follows:

> Many recognized that an additive model of gender, race and class as distinct dimensions or systems would violate the experience that feminists were attempting to capture with their theorizing. For example, a woman who is Black (White), Spanish (English) speaking and a doctor (waitress) does not experience herself *in disjointed segments* of gender, race, ethnicity and class; rather, all these elements are produced and reproduced within the same everyday experiencing of her life. *Theory would have to reflect that reality and the diverse patterning and interplay of processes of domination, collusion and protest* (Acker, 1999: 51) (Italics added).

Following Mill (2000), it seems tenable to argue that one can never claim to have the truth in his/her hands, but s/he can only approximate to the truth. In this sense, we can say that while theorizing Black women's experiences, we have to apply to class, race and gender as our conceptual tools that approximate us to the Black women's reality to a significant extent.

As has been clarified up to now, Black feminist thought has much to offer particularly in terms of its sophisticated analysis of a variety of interlocking systems of oppression that Black women experience. However, it is far from accurate to claim that the meaning, role and significance of Black feminism are limited with this contribution. It is quite possible to argue that Black feminist standpoint is a noteworthy one primarily because it has an oppositional form of knowledge. In other words, Black feminist consciousness has the very potential to be able to eliminate all forms of oppression. As Collins puts it:

> Given the significance of elite discourses in maintaining power relations, knowledge produced by, for and/or in behalf of African American women becomes vitally important in resisting oppression (Fanon, 1963; Cabral, 1973). Such oppositional knowledge typically aims to foster Black women's opposition to oppression and their search for justice (Collins, 1998: 45).

To clarify, compared to the white mainstream feminist theory and activism, Black feminist thought, thanks to its marginalized standpoint, has more potential to transform patriarchal social structure because: "revolution is best practiced precisely

from the margins, rather than from the mainstream" (Stanley and Wise, 1990: 44). Doubtlessly, such an offer should not remind one of a dichotomized understanding of mainstream (White) feminism versus peripheral/marginal (Black) feminism, but Black feminism is a point that is beyond the achievements as well as implicit assumptions of mainstream feminism that "actually reflected the experiences and analyses of white, middle-class, heterosexual, First World women only" (Stanley and Wise, 1990: 22). In other words, the basic concern of feminist theory and activism is both the analysis and transformation of women's oppression and subordination within the broader patriarchal power relations. At this point, we come to face that, although 'categorically' all women are 'systematically' oppressed in patriarchal social structures throughout history, some women are more oppressed than some other women. What is more striking here is that there might be some women who are among the oppressors of the more oppressed women. Thus, a feminist politics which is concerned with the analysis and transformation of women's oppression and subordination should be constructed upon the experiences of the more oppressed women. If we think of the experiences of Black women and White women, we see that there are more similarities between Black women and women in general simply because both groups are oppressed. But there is a vital similarity between the experiences of White women and men in general in terms of oppressing women. This is why Black feminist theory can be more inclusive and emancipatory for women in terms of providing a road map. Put in Farganis' words, it is Black women who have "epistemic advantage" (Farganis, 1994: 33) since "by virtue of their 'marginality' they are able to see the world in a clearer way" (Farganis, 1994: 33) and thus they have more potential to introduce a social transformation. It is possible to derive a

similar answer to the question of 'Why is Black feminism the answer to the road map of feminist politics?' from what Collins says in the following:

> Rearticulating the standpoint of African American women through black feminist thought is much more difficult since *one cannot use the same techniques to study the knowledge of the dominated as one uses to study the knowledge of the powerful*. *This is precisely because subordinate groups have long had to use alternative ways to create an independent consciousness* and to rearticulate through specialists validated by the oppressed themselves (Collins, 2001: 186-187) (Italics added).

Its critique of the white mainstream feminism, its cautious approach to the theorization of the intersectionality of the varying systems of oppression that Black women have been subject to and the potential it carries for the social and political change are the three factors that make Black feminism a remarkable political paradigm. As Taylor indicates:

> African American women have aggressively shaped feminist theory and praxis to include issues unique to them. Holding on to Black feminism is a way of protecting a progressive political agenda. Black feminism may conjure up the racist history of White women, but it must also be identified with the glorious tradition of Black female activists' trenchant commitment to empowering themselves to create a humanistic community (Taylor, 1998: 8).

In brief, the meaning, role and significance of Black feminism can be collected at three interconnected points. First of all, Black feminism has raised a challenging criticism against the mainstream feminism whose claims and struggle were constructed upon the experiences of only a limited segment of women, i.e. First World, white, middle-class and heterosexual women. In this sense Black feminism has shown us that the mainstream theory and activism had a partial rather than comprehensive basis. Secondly, taking this critique as its ground, Black feminism familiarized us with the question of difference among women. That is to say, it displayed the fact that there was not a unitary category of women, nor was there a homogeneous set of experiences of women. Particularly in the western social

context, due to colonialism, imperialism and enslavement processes that had started with the gradual emergence and development of capitalism from the 16th century onwards, race and class came out as the most significant categories that deeply divided women. Sexuality was also another important source of division among women, which can best be explained on the basis of patriarchy. Hence, what we see is the crystallization of intersecting systems of oppression emanating from gender, race, class and sexuality in the life experiences of Black women. White women also took a part in the oppression and subordination of Black women under the dominant racist ideological discourse. Thirdly, Black feminism has much to offer in terms of developing a common feminist politics primarily because it has given voice to theoretically as well as historically the most oppressed women. Moreover, that Black feminism is quite promising in regards to the feminist transformations of patriarchal social and political processes is due to the fact that it is an oppositional form of knowledge.

A critical point deserving to be made here is that despite its noteworthy contributions, Black feminism should not be taken as a monolithic theory and activism. This emanates from the fact that all Black women cannot be met on the very common grounds of oppression and subordination. In other words, one should not forget the fact that all Black women per se are not oppressed and subordinated since they are Black women. Similarly, all white women cannot in advance be said to be less oppressed and subordinated than Black women. This thesis is far from such an overgeneralization. Rather, what is underlined here is the point that as the varied and literature and set of experiences of Black women display, there was seen the intersectional and multiple form of oppression and subordination which Black women underwent.

The question arising here is that despite the deep-seated differences and divisions among women and their experiences, how it is possible to find a common ground. Definitely, we do not have a magic stick that will let us overcome or go beyond these differences and divisions. In fact we should learn to recognize and respect the differences. This is critically important. Another important thing is that feminists could best find a common ground among themselves, I think, by bearing in my mind that feminism is "a critical form of consciousness" (Ramazanoğlu, 1989). Such a critical form of consciousness will not prescribe simply what to do and/or what not to do, but rather by leading feminists to critical distanciation from and critical approach to their social and historical surroundings, it will make it much easier for them to find a common ground upon which to act together.

Having examined Black feminist thought, it is time to ask the question of whether it is possible to speak of Kurdish women as the 'Black women' of Turkey? How far can we apply to the experiences of Black women while explaining/analyzing Kurdish women's experiences? We can analyze social and political processes only by means of theoretical and conceptual frameworks. I think that the application of the theoretical and conceptual frame of reference provided by Black feminism is an attempt that seems a well-suited explanatory method for the case of Kurdish women. This is basically because both Black and Kurdish women experience multiple oppression. The predominant sources of oppression are gender, race and ethnicity in both cases. However, one can see that although their oppression presents a crucial similarity in its composition of an intersection of systems of oppression, still there are considerable differences in the two sets of experiences. Firstly, it is important to note that while race is one important constituent element in the experience of Black women; its counterpart is ethnicity in the case of Kurdish

women, a point which denotes an important difference. As Cornell and Hartmann note, while in the context of ethnicity "identity is based on putative common descent, claims of shared history and symbols of peoplehood" (1998: 35), in the case of race "identity is based on perceived physical differences" (1998: 35). Secondly, the experiences of Black women and Kurdish women differ primarily because of distinct social and historical contexts of the United States and Britain and that of Turkey. While America and Britain are two modern, industrial capitalist countries with a history of modernization which has been experienced as a 'process', Turkey is a country that is still on its way of development that can be traced back to the first half of the 19th century modernization attempts called the *Tanzimat* (Reorganizations). Here it is important to remember that while modernization was a 'process' in the West, it has always been a 'project' to be adopted and achieved in Turkey. I think that while the imperialism, colonization and enslavement processes in the West can well help us understand the racist and sexist ideological discourse that caused Black women to experience multiple oppression, in Turkey the so-called 'woman question' in general and the oppression and subordination of Kurdish women can be explained to a significant extent under the light of the modernization/westernization 'project' of the Republican ideological discourse. Undoubtedly, this is closely connected with the process of social and historical construction of Turkishness in the 1920s and 1930s, which consequently led to the homogenization/repression of other ethnic identities within the borders of the Turkish Republic.

In addition to the history of Turkish modernization "project", another very important factor that shapes and determines the experiences of Kurdish women is the specificity of Kurdish culture and society. It is important that one should not attribute an essentialist meaning to what Kurdishness is, that is to say, one should not forget

that it is also socially and historically constructed. Still it is possible to observe a strong patriarchal social structure of Kurds that is characterized by religion, sects, traditions and customs.

Although theorization of Black women's experiences provides us with a notable conceptual frame of reference whose central characteristics is 'multiple oppression', this thesis remains naïve/weak unless it is supported by sociological as well as historical observations and analysis. That is why this study must be seen as a minor starting point for the theorization of the experiences of Kurdish women in Turkey. As I briefly pointed out above, this can be done roughly under two interdependent categories. The first is an engendered historical overview of the Kurdish culture and society at large in order to find out the specific oppression and subordination experiences of Kurdish women. Secondly, engendering and ethnicising the Turkish modernization project will also reveal us important points about the oppression of Kurdish women. In fact from within an ethnicising perspective, an overview of the feminist theory and activism in Turkey in the aftermath of the 1980s will also provide us with another indicator that shows how the experiences of Kurdish women have been disregarded and/or omitted. In brief, it can be said that to understand the experiences of Kurdish women is a twofold enterprise: *ethnicising* the recent feminist literature as well as historiography in Turkey and *engendering* the Kurdish question from a historical perspective. Indeed such an enterprise will not only help us understand the specific experience of oppression and subordination of Kurdish women, but it will also contribute to feminism in Turkey by challenging the mainstream Turkish feminist discourse, which can be said to be largely leaning on an elitist discourse. Put bluntly, Kurdish women do have, to use Farganis' concept (1994: 33) the "epistemic advantage" due to their silenced and marginalized

standpoints and thus, their experience carries a significant weight for the feminist theory and movement in Turkey.

CHAPTER II

FEMINISM AND THE KURDISH QUESTION IN TURKEY

2.1 A Historical Overview of Feminism in Turkey

In the following three sub-sections I will attempt to make an overview of the historical development process of feminism in Turkey. In this context, following Tekeli (1995b), I will examine it by means of three historical periods. The first period is the period that stretches from the second half of the 19th century Ottoman Empire to the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923. As the following account of the Ottoman women's movement displays, there were lively debates concerning the position of women in the family and in society by means of associational as well as journalistic activities. The second period begins with the establishment of the Republic and continues until the 1980s. After the foundation of the Republic, one can see that women were granted, quite radically, significant social and political rights in the early decades of the Republican Era. However, as a number of scholars, whose interpretations will be referred to, point out, this period is weak in terms of women's movement since there is a dominant articulation of feminism by the State. The third period corresponds to the 1980s and 1990s. In the 1980s there emerged an autonomous and radical feminist movement in Turkey. In the following three sub-sections, I will go into the examination of these periods more deeply.

2.1.1 Ottoman Women's Movement

The position of women in the Ottoman Empire was quite low. As Tekeli notes:

> [In the pre-Tanzimat period] the legal and social status of women was defined by Sharia, the Islamic law which also legitimated the whole state system. According to Sharia, women were not legally equal to men, although some of their rights were under guarantee. *With regard to testifying before a court of law, she was worth half a man, and with regard to family, which permitted four wives, she was worth even less* (Ortaylı, 1984: 82) (Tekeli, 1986: 181) (italics added).

However, the status of women started to change with the announcement of the *Tanzimat Fermanı* (Decree of Reorganizations) in 1839. With the 1858 Land Reform, girls were given equal rights with boys in terms of inheritance, and secondary schools, teachers' schools and midwifery schools for girls were opened (Tekeli, 1986: 182). In addition to the debates maintained by the reformist intellectual elites of the time, one can see that later on women also got involved in the debates concerning their lower status in society. Especially after the proclamation of the *2nd Meşrutiyet* (Constitutional Monarchy) in 1908, women of the Ottoman Empire published a variety of journals and established many associations and societies, and they started to problematize their position in the family and in society at large (Güzel, 1985; Tekeli, 1985, 1995a; Çakır, 1996a, 1996b; Demirdirek, 1993, 1998; Berktay, 1996). Therefore, whether it is called Ottoman women's movement (Çakır, 1996a) or the first wave of feminism in Turkey (Tekeli, 1998), one can well speak of a women's movement in the Ottoman Empire, which was carried out by means of journalistic and associational activities. That is why it is quite tenable to argue that what Tekeli (1998: 345) asserts is far from inaccurate: "As all we have

been repeating, the thesis that women's rights in Turkey were 'granted from above by Atatürk' is wrong, unjust", an argument which can be seen in various feminist researchers (Abadan-Unat, 1981: 12; Jayawardena, 1986: 41; Kandiyoti, 1997: 67-68).

It is necessary to remember that the enunciation of 'Ottoman women' does not imply a homogeneous category. Indeed Ottoman women were divided to a significant extent in terms of their religion, urban/rural position and social status. Therefore, as Burçak (1998: 109) warns, when one speaks of Ottoman woman, s/he should clearly determine whom s/he is talking of. At this point it should be added that Ottoman women whose activism is examined in this thesis were mostly inhabitants in İstanbul and they were educated women.

Ottoman women firstly expressed their demands through journals. As Demirdirek (1998: 66) informs us, there were over forty publications oriented towards women. Here I will not focus on every one of them; rather I will throw light upon several of them, which can be considered as distinguishing from others in certain respects. In this context, the first journal oriented towards women was *Terakki-i Muhadderat* (Progress of Muslim Women). It was a weekly supplement of a newspaper called *Terakki* (Progress). It was published between 1869 and 1870 in İstanbul. There are a total of forty-eight numbers of *Terakki-i Muhadderat* in the present collections. It included writings and articles about the education of children as well as practical knowledge about domestic work and issues (Çakır et al., 1993: 360-366). *Aile* (Family) was, on the other hand, the first journal to be published not as a supplement of any newspaper but as a journal in itself. There are three issues of *Aile* that were published between May 27 and June 10, 1880 in İstanbul. It was a journal that "contained various treaties concerning family, i.e. women, children and

housework" (Çakır et al., 1993: 1). Another journal was *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete* (Newspaper Peculiar to Ladies). Among the Ottoman women's journals, it was the one that was published for the longest period of time. It was published between 1895 and 1908 in İstanbul. There are six hundred and twelve issues of *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete* in the collections. Its goal was put as follows:

> Our job is quite vast. If we summarize it in one or two words, we would say: to serve to raise the extension of our ladies' knowledge in every way: to be the mirror of reflection of the opinions of women poets and writers, that is to say, to display the innate abilities of Ottoman women through the publication of their works (*Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete*, 19 Ağustos, 1311; no. 1, pp. 2-3).

Another journal was called *Kadınlar Dünyası* (Women's World). It was published by the *Osmanlı Müdafaa-i Hukuk-u Nisvan Cemiyeti* (Ottoman Association of the Defense of the Rights of Women). An illustrated journal, it was published between April 17, 1913 and May 21, 1921 in İstanbul. There are two hundred and eight issues of *Kadınlar Dünyası* in the collections. While it was published daily from 1st to 100th issues, it continued to be published weekly for the rest.

It was the most radical of all Ottoman women's journals, to the extent that it did not allow male writers to write in its columns. In fact this was its basic principle (Aşa, 1992: 972). Its goal was: "to defend rights and interests of womanhood" (Çakır et al., 1993: 250). Unlike *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete*, whose writers were elite intellectual and literary women[2] of the time, *Kadınlar Dünyası* received the writings of and support from women of every segment of society (Çakır, 1996a: 38). It used 'feminism' in order to describe its standpoint (Çakır, 1996a: 38). Another different

[2] For a biography of one of these women *see* Bekiroğlu (1998).

aspect of *Kadınlar Dünyası* was that it had a four-page French supplement during the numbers from 121 to 128 (Aşa, 1992: 972).

Before going into the analysis of the associations, it is important to give some examples about the demands and points that Ottoman women raised in these journals. The editorial of *Kadınlar Dünyası*, under the title of *Osmanlı Kadınlığının İstediği* (What Ottoman Womanhood Demands) counts one by one their demands as in the following:

> What does Ottoman womanhood want? What kind of an aim are they following? The time to understand these has come.
>
> *First of all the situation of Ottoman womanhood can be expressed with three words: to awake, to see and to demand*. Yes, we, Ottoman women, have been in a deep sleep. Dreaming of fearful, terrifying and awfuls dreams, we have been worried in that sleep. This sleep of ours has been continuing for years. But it could not any more. At last, the disasters that happened to us and the intensity of the light of knowledge have awaked us up. This awakening of us is quite natural. It is the requirement of the law of nature.
>
> The Ottoman *millet* (nation) could no longer bear its womanhood's sleeping... Here, upon that severe necessity we are awakening and have awaked.
> After awakening the stage of seeing comes... And the first thing we saw was our humanity. We understood that we, too, are human beings and we saw to live in a humane way... In short, we saw all the things, which a human being sees after awakening, and we can see now.
>
> And then we wanted. We wanted to live well and to make our *millet* live well...
> Our purpose is the elevation and happiness of our womanhood and by this way, of our *millet*... In order for us to be happy, it is necessary that we be human beings and for this, we must have liberty which is the *sine qua non* of humanity.
> *Today, we do not want "political liberty" as English suffragettes do. We are compelled with the obedience to the law of evolution. We know this. Now what we demand are "social liberty" (hürriyet-i ictimaiye) and social law (ictimai kanun), which will let us live happily*. We have a need even prior to these. First of all we want to become enlightened... We are sure that if we do not take the light of knowledge (*nur-u marifet*), every structure that we construct will be groundless and demolished... Therefore, our first enterprise will be education... We want to become enlightened, and like men, to become scientists, specialists and artists... We want new schools that assure these goals of ours.
> At the present, our demands in general are the following:
> 1) To elevate the level of culture of the womanhood through the foundation of schools and through reforming the ones that have been founded

> 2) In order to get rid of misery of the womanhood, to incorporate women into the life of work
>
> 3) To be able to provide these essentials, to reform the outer clothing of women
> 4) To facilitate the principles of marriage and to destroy harmful customs concerning marriage
> 5) To strengthen the position of woman in the family
> 6) To train mothers who will be able to give the initial education to our children in the way that is in line with the present science
>
> 7) To mix women with the social life
> Here, we want these, these social needs of ours. And we are working to assure these. If these demands of ours are embodied, definitely we and our *millet* will be happy.
> Apart from these, time will teach our other demands. Firstly let's become enlightened, let's become elevated... We now have a principle. We are following it. It is the gradual evolution (Kadınlar Dünyası, "Osmanlı Kadınlığının İstediği", *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 5 Teşrin-i Evvel 1329, no. 112, p. 2) (italics added).

It is quite a striking depiction of the Ottoman womanhood: to awake, to see and to demand! And the demands that were put forward were ranging from the private to the public sphere because Ottoman women had been denied their liberty and rights. In fact Y. Naciye, one of the authors of *Kadınlar Dünyası*, argues that the historical development process of emancipation had been limited to a certain segment of society, i.e., men, who were small dictotars, and that women were forgotten in this process:

> Yes, *even though men apparently seem to be freedom-lovers, they are in actual fact nothing but small dictators*. Even while they covered the continents with blood with the cries of 'Liberty! Liberty!' they failed to see the universe of women which was greater and more important. They did not grant women political rights. They avoided giving them even human rights (Y. Naciye, "Erkekler Hakikaten Hürriyetperver midirler? Kadınlar Ne İstiyorlar?" *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 10 Nisan 1329, no. 7, p. 3) (italics added).

It is quite interesting that Ottoman women put a reservation on the fact that men gained their liberty by the proclamation of the *2nd Meşrutiyet* whereas women did not. In other words, they argued for the fact that, like men, women also had to

fight for their liberty. This is the point that was made on the fifth anniversary of the *2nd Meşrutiyet*, that is, on July 10, 1913:

> On July 10 our men got their rights of rulership, their civil and human rights. They fully realized that they were human beings...
>
> Ooh womanhood! Will you still remain in that benighted state? You, too, have an inner light, a right and humanity; will it not be acknowledged?! Womanhood! When will you see and realize that you are you? When will you, too, live freely? When will your rights be accepted among public law (*hukuk-u umumiye*)? You are the mother of this *millet* that blesses and honors liberty. *Will you continue to be the slave of customs, bigotry and ignorance*? You, too, are a human being; you, too, are the possessor of a right! *Women, women! Liberty was not given to our men; they took it by force. It is said that right is not given but taken... We, women, also demand our own natural and civil rights. If they do not give, we, too, will take it by force*!
>
> VIVE LA LIBERTE (Kadınlar Dünyası, "10 Temmuz İd-i Ekber-i Hürriyettir", *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 10 Temmuz 1329, no. 98, p. 1) (italics added).

As it can be seen, Ottoman women raised and problematized notable issues concerning their position in the family and society. Furthermore, by establishing associations, they attempted to search for solutions to a variety of problems of their time (Çakır, 1996a: 43). Ottoman women's associations can be examined in two broad categories. The first is charity associations that were established with philanthropic purposes. Çakır (1996a) gives a variety of examples from these charity associations such as *Topkapı Fukaraperver Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* (Topkapı Beneficial Association of the Charitable), *Kadıköy Fukarasever Hanımlar Cemiyeti* (Kadıköy Poorloving Association of Ladies), *Himaye-i Etfal Cemiyeti* (Association of the Protection of Children), *Asker Ailelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti* (Association of Ladies Helping the Families of Soldiers), *Müslüman Kadın Birliği* (Union of Muslim Women), *Osmanlı Donanma Cemiyeti Hanımlar Şubesi* (Woman Branch of Ottoman Navy Association), *Esirge Derneği* (Protect Association), *Biçki Yurdu*

(Tailoring School), *Bikes Ailelere Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti* (Association of Ladies Helping Lonely Families).

Although in what follows, I will attempt to display the associations openly following 'feminist' goals, here it is important to note, as Yaraman does (2001: 89), that irrespective of their inherent purposes, Ottoman women, who have for centuries been imprisoned in their homes, got out of their homes and came to the public sphere to get organized and act as 'women'. In a parallel vein, Berktay (2001: 351) rightly points out to the fact that the analysis concerning Ottoman feminism must incorporate the fact that the Ottoman state was a state of *Sharia* and that the influence of Islam was reflected upon the cultural as well as physical spheres, and thus, Ottoman women's demands of rights must be evaluated within their *sui generis* material circumstances. Thus, to disregard the specific social and historical context of Ottoman women and to claim that their movement remained solely imitative of its contemporary western feminist movements (Kaplan, 1999: 467) is far from tenable.

The second category of Ottoman women's associations can be delineated as the ones that were clearly devoted to the defense of the rights of women by the enhancement of their social and economic positions. Put differently, the basic concern of these associations was to defend women's rights, to modernize their appearance and lifestyles and thus, to provide women with the opportunity and possibility of education and work. Particularly, one can see that education gains the priority in their attempts of enhancing the position of women. Some examples of this sort of associations can be given as follows: *Azkaniver Hayuhyaç İngerutyan* was an Armenian one that concerned itself with the education of women. It aimed at opening new schools for young girls and helping the education of Armenian women in

Anatolia, and in fact it opened twenty-three schools in Anatolia (Çakır, 1996a: 49). Here one can see the intersection of the basic concern for women with a pro-nationalistic dimension. In fact it is possible to see some sort of parallelism between Armenian women's association and *Teali-i Nisvan Cemiyeti* (Association for the Elevation of Women), which was established by Halide Edib and her friends with the purpose of serving the advancement of the level of knowledge and culture of women on the condition of not abandoning the national traditions (Çakır, 1996a: 53). A similar example is the association that was established by Kurdish women in 1919 in İstanbul. Its name was *Kürt Kadınları Teali Cemiyeti* (Association for the Advancement of Kurdish Women). After introducing the association in the first principle of its regulations, in the second one it declared its aim as to provide the development and progress of Kurdish women with a contemporary understanding and to actualize radical reforms in the family life (Alakom, 1998: 40). Alakom's[3] relatively recent discovery of this association is important since it displays the diversity and richness of the Ottoman women's associational activities, which are still open to be explored. Another association exemplifying the articulation of 'womanhood' and nationality was *Çerkes Kadınları Teavün Cemiyeti* (Association of Mutual Assistance of Circassian Women), which was established with the aim of helping the Circassians who were in need of help and to protect children via the establishment of schools, orphanages and workhouses (*işevleri*) as well as to develop national culture (Çakır, 1996a: 339).

[3] I do not agree with Alakom when he implicitly means that both Çakır and Demirdirek conciously overlook the existence of this association (*also see* Alakom, 2001), which does not seem to be a just claim, since Çakır states that she introduces those associations as far as she has been able to find out (1996a: 43) and Demirdirek (1993) is not at all concerned with associations of the time but only with some of the Ottoman women's journals.

Ottoman women got involved in journalistic and associational activities that were oriented to problematize their position in the family and in society. Their demands were, however, restricted with social and economic rights, and they did not demand political rights since it was seen as untimely. Another way of saying is that they were conscious of what they demanded and what they did not demand:

> In our country there have not been any talks about the right of women to vote and about whether or not to give this right to them. And even debates about this have not started. In this sense, actually there does not seem any movement in us, in women. *This silence of ours is not because we do not want it but because we are convinced that its time has not come yet.*
>
> *Our womanhood has not unfortunately entered the public life yet. She has not been able to enter it, she has not been able to participate in it. That's why we cannot speak of the right to vote*.
>
> We believe that very soon woman will become a social individual in our country and only then, after the realization of this belief, we will think of the right to vote and we believe in the success of its acquisition with an enthusiastic faith (Kadınlar Dünyası, "Kadın ve Hakk-ı İntihab" *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 1 Mart 1914, no: 133, p. 2) (italics added).

However, still one can see that there was an attempt to establish a political party called *Kadınlar Halk Fırkası* (Women's People Party) under the leadership of Nezihe Muhittin[4] in June 2003 prior to the foundation of the Republic (Toprak, 1988). Yet they were not allowed since a "separatist" party would not be appropriate for the conditions of the time (Toprak, 1988: 31).

[4] Besides Muhittin's autobiographical work, namely, *Türk Kadını*; for some analysis of her understanding of feminism as well as of her novels *see* Baykan and Ötüş-Baskett (1999).

2.1.2 The Period from the Proclamation of the Turkish Republic in 1923 to the 1980s

Tekeli (1998) depicts women's movement in the Ottoman Empire, which corresponds especially to the period of the1910s and 1920s as the first wave of the feminist movement, and from the 1980s onwards as that of the second. According to her, such a periodization is made on the basis of the intensity of the events, activism and demands of women. While she sees the forty or forty-five year-period prior to the first wave as the preparatory phase for the first wave, she calls the period until the 1980s as "infertile years" since there was almost no women's movement, especially due to the dominance of state feminism. Indeed, as Abadan-Unat (1998: 328) points out, women's activism, especially in the wars during the 1910s to the early 1920s, later left the ground for an effective "state feminism".

In the early decades of the Republic, one can see very significant developments concerning women's emancipation and gaining equality with men. In 1926, the Swiss Civil Code was adopted with slight modifications. Consequently, women got equality with men before the law. For example, women got the right to divorce. Polygamy was made illegal. Moreover, in 1930 women were granted political rights in municipal elections. In 1934, the right to vote and to be elected in national elections followed it.

Yet while analyzing these developments the following points should not be forgotten. Firstly, as Tekeli puts: "Behind the adoption of the Civil Code and citizenship rights in 1926 lies the struggle of the first wave women's movement" (Tekeli, 1998: 345). In a parallel vein, women fought for the vote, as Sirman notes:

"It is necessary to indicate that a handful of women, especially between 1926 and 1934 did fight to obtain the vote" (Sirman, 1989: 13; *see also* Saktanber, 2001). However, one should not overemphasize the role women's struggle had in obtaining the right to vote, although it had its contribution. In this context, an important point is that, as Tekeli (1981: 298) notes behind women's obtaining the right to vote was laying an attempt of dissociating the single party regime of Turkey from that of fascist parties in Europe.

Secondly, the activism of women was tried to be controlled by the State. In this respect, a notable point to be remembered here is the closing down of the Turkish Woman's Federation in 1935. As Arat notes:

> Similarly, in 1935, when the Turkish Woman's Federation collaborated with feminists from around the world to host a Congress of Feminism in Turkey and issued a declaration against the Nazi threat, the modernizing elite was displeased. *The federation was closed. It was argued that the republic had given women all their rights and there was no more need for women to organize. Women had displayed increasing autonomy from state policies when they collaborated with feminists from around the world, especially when they criticized the Nazis while their government was carefully keeping a low profile on the international scene* (Arat, 1997: 101) (italics added).

As Işık (personal communication), too, points out, the closing down of the Turkish Woman's Federation can well be read as follows: the clash of feminism with the State *had* started but it was done away with by the State.

The third significant point is that Kemalism, despite the radical social and political transformation that it introduced, shares certain continuities with its Ottoman past in terms of the maintenance of the patriarchal norms of morality. As Durakbaşa argues:

> *Kemalism, although a progressive ideology that fostered women's participation in education and the professions, did not alter the patriarchal norms of morality, and in fact maintained the basic cultural conservatism*

> *about male/female relations, despite its radicalism in opening a space for women in the public domain* (Durakbaşa, 1998: 140) (italics added) (*see also* Durakbaşa, 2002).

A very similar point is also made by Berktay (2001: 353). Berktay states that on the one hand, there is a very significant point of break between the Ottoman and the Republican societies in terms of the position of women. On the other hand, she argues, there is continuity on the basis of patriarchy. Put bluntly, the nation-state patriarchy took the place of Islamic patriarchy. While the invisibility of women in the public realm was the norm in the former, her visibility became the new norm in the latter, both of which were fed by the same framework, that is, patriarchy. Saktanber (2001: 332) also attempts an analysis of the Kemalist woman rights discourse and concludes that Kemalist women's rights discourse is a modernist, progressive discourse that gives priority to the achievement of the equality of men and women at the legal level and for this aim, it attributes importance to working with the state in harmony. More importantly, she points out to the fact that:

> *Kemalist women's rights discourse puts the national identity above any other sort of identity and especially it excludes the women's movements that are shaped around the ethnic or religious identity demands. Also it views the achievements within the frame of women's rights as the means of Kemalist indoctrination and in this context; it attributes the mission of political socialization to the education* (Saktanber, 2001: 332) (italics added).

As all the above-mentioned critical points display, from the early decades of the Republic onwards, the autonomous voice of women's organizations and activities were repressed. Thus, until the 1980s, one cannot see the flourishing of an independent women's movement. On the contrary, as Tekeli argues:

> *It should not be counted as an exaggeration to see this second phase of the history of feminism, as a period during which feminism was taken out of the hands of women and was used and was further converted to an anti-feminist*

> *state feminism and in the end, was made to be forgotten* (Tekeli, 1989: 35) (italics added).

In a parallel vein, Berktay states that:

> *The Republican regime was opening a space for the feminism supported by the state, yet at the same time it* [the Republican regime] *defined it and kept it within certain/determinate borders. Moreover, the women themselves had internalized the Kemalist-nationalist ideology and this was making it difficult for them to develop an independent consciousness* (Berktay, 1996: 760) (italics added).

Such a depiction of women's instrumental use by the Kemalist nationalist ideology (*see also* Kadıoğlu, 1998) helps one understand the lack of autonomous women's associations and/or organizations. Instead, what one sees in the 1950s and 1960s are the ones that were oriented towards philanthropic goals (Çakır, 1996b: 751; Işık, personal communication). In the 1970s there were women's associations that were established by women in the leftist movement (Çakır, 1996b; Kılıç, 1998). The first one which was established was *İlerici Kadınlar Derneği* (Progressive Women's Association). An important number of its founders were from *Türkiye Komünist Partisi* (Communist Party in Turkey), however, it was not a branch of the party; it was an association (Kılıç, 1998: 352). As Kılıç states, with its extensive organization throughout the country and quite active membership, later, it played an important role on the lives of many of its members in terms of creating self-confidence (Kılıç, 1998: 354).

2.1.3 The Feminist Movement in Turkey in the 1980s and 1990s

The military intervention of September 12, 1980, brought political life to an end. Political parties and groups were closed down and their leaders were arrested (Tekeli, 1989: 36). Though it could be seen as paradoxical, women's feminist activism corresponds exactly to this period. Women started to act as 'women' on their behalf with demands concerning their oppression and subordination in the patriarchal and sexist social structure. Theirs was a radical emergence, as Arat points out:

> Until the 1980s, there was a consensus in society that Kemalist reforms had emancipated women and that this "fact" could not be contested. Not merely the educated professional women agreed; so did both educated and illiterate housewives who knew their daughters would benefit from opportunities the reforms provided. *The consensus broke down when a younger generation of educated women professionals who called themselves feminists challenged the tradition. In search of new cultural identities, feminists criticized the project of modernity as it affected women. Their goal was not to seek equality with men in the public realm but to question the heritage which upheld that equality*. They were ready to commit a sacrilege and deny being Atatürkists (Arat, 1997: 103) (italics added).

It should be noted that their organization and activism did not emerge all of a sudden. They first came together in consciousness-raising groups in which they composed political and ideological accumulations (Bora and Günal, 2002: 8; Bora, 1996). These groups emerged in Ankara and İstanbul. In addition to the meetings in the consciousness-raising groups, there were important publication activities by means of which women discovered feminist theories. Also they organized conferences and discussion panels, as Sirman notes:

> Various publications, including magazines, literary novels and pamphlets became available in bookshops…Writings by European feminists such as J. Mitchell, A. Michel, L. Segal and A. Oakley, as well as Egyptian writer Nawal

> El Saadawi were translated into Turkish. Public conferences and discussion panels denouncing the abuse of women in the home, in media images and in legal stature were held…In a country where the vast majority of the population does not have the habit of reading as a leisure activity, feminist publications had a limited impact even in the big cities (Sirman, 1989: 18).

As Tekeli (1989: 37) informs us, in the journal called *Somut* (Concrete) feminist women were given a one-page space and in this page they made publications in the light of feminist principles. It continued for six months. Then, they left *Somut* as they received criticism from the Orthodox left (Tekeli, 1989: 37-38). As Tekeli (1989: 38) points out, with the experience in *Somut*, they learnt about the necessity of having an independent publication organ in order for them to be able to put across their opinions and thoughts.

On March 8, 1984, thirty-five women in İstanbul founded *Kadın Çevresi Anonim Şirketi* (Woman's Circle Anonymous Company) (Çakır, 1996b: 752). Its aim was: "to raise women's consciousness, to form the concepts concerning sexism and to discover these in society and to decipher them" (Çakır, 1996b: 752). *Kadın Çevresi* from 1984 onwards, published translated books, among which were also included classics of feminism (Tekeli, 1989: 38). Moreover, in 1988 the socialist feminist journal *Kaktüs* (Cactus) started to be published (Çakır, 1996b: 753).

In addition to such publication activities and consciousness-raising groups, one can see important campaigns and protest marches that aimed to bring the issue of the oppression of women in contemporary Turkish society to the attention of the public. In this sense, a petition campaign was carried out in 1986. It was oriented towards Turkey's being a part of the contract on *Kadınlara Karşı Her Türlü Ayrımcılığın Önlenmesi Sözleşmesi* (The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women). 6000 women signed the petition (Tekeli, 1989: 39).

The activism of the feminist women gradually started to turn the public attention to the issue of the oppression that women were facing. The attitude of the media also began to change (Tekeli, 1989: 39), and the feminist movement started to gain recognition and legitimacy in society.

There was a protest march organized on May 17, 1987. In terms of the high degree of the participation of women and in terms of being the first public meeting in the post-coup d'état period, it was a very significant event. About 3000 women participated in it. Sirman further indicates its importance as follows:

> *This was not the first time that women in Turkey had taken to the streets, but it certainly was the first time that they had voiced demands specific to their conditions of existence as women in Turkish society*. As stated by one of the speakers at the rally marking the end of the march, women were not marching for their nation, their class, nor for their husbands, brothers and sons, but for themselves (Sirman, 1989: 1) (italics added).

In 1986, *Kadın Emeğini Değerlendirme Vakfı* (Foundation for the Support of Women's Work) was founded. The aim of the foundation was oriented towards assuring equal participation in the working life of the women who have not fully integrated into the urban life, in addition to solving their problems in this process (Çakır, 1996b: 752). Also in 1989 there was organized a meeting, namely, *1. Türkiye Feministleri Hafta Sonu Buluşması* (1st Feminist Weekend Forum in Turkey) by a feminist group called *Perşembe Grubu* (Thursday Group) in Ankara (Tekeli, 1989: 39). In this meeting various issues, such as women's politics on the feminists' agenda, the question of how to organize and so on were discussed (Tekeli, 1989: 39). At the end of the meeting *Kadınların Kurtuluşu Bildirgesi* (Women's Liberation Manifesto) was drawn up. Also in 1989 *1. Kadın Kurultayı* (1st Woman's Deliberative Assembly) was convened. In the same year there was held a campaign

called *Mor İğne* (Purple Needle). It aimed to draw attention to sexual harassment directed at women.

As it can be seen, the feminists in the 1980s, through various activities such as publications, protests, campaigns and meetings in the consciousness-raising groups, attempted both to learn the feminist theory and to bring the issue of women's oppression to the agenda in Turkey. It took its place as an autonomous as well as oppositional movement in society (Çakır, 1996b: 753).

However, one can see that this activism did not continue at that level in the 1990s. What foremost characterizes the 1990s is the institutionalization of the movement. As Çakır indicates:

> In 1990 Women's Library and Information Center was founded. Any written and visual stuff concerning the woman was started to be collected. Not only the archive of books, but also that of newspapers and articles were composed (Çakır, 1996b: 755).

Moreover, in 1990 *Mor Çatı Kadın Sığınağı Vakfı* (Purple Roof Woman's Shelter Foundation) was established. Its aim was to provide shelter for the women who suffered violence. Also a variety of shelter houses were founded in different towns. In addition, in 1990 at the governmental level for the first time a branch concerning the improvement of the position of women was founded. It is called *Kadının Statüsü ve Problemleri Genel Müdürlüğü* (The Directorate General on the Status and Problems of Women). It is under the umbrella of *Çalışma ve Sosyal Güvenlik Bakanlığı* (Ministry of Work and Social Security). Thirteen Research Centres on women were opened in universities along with graduate programs in women's studies in three universities. While the *Research and Implementation Center on the Problems of Women* was founded at the University of İstanbul in 1990, it was

founded in 1992 at the Universities of Ankara and Marmara. Also *Gender and Women's Studies Graduate Program* was founded at Middle East Technical University in 1993.

Another characteristic of the 1990s was the emergence of Kurdish feminists and "Muslim feminists":

> One other feature of the 1990s was the fact that the women who had not taken a part in the feminist movement in the '80s, developed feminist demands in relation to the Kurdish movement and Islamic movement and they got organized around these demands. Kurdish women questioned both the patriarchy of the nationalist movement and the "Turkish"ness of feminism in Turkey. "Muslim feminists", on the other hand, opposed the elitist-domineering attitude of the feminist movement and they tried to show that there was not a contradiction between the faith of Muslim women and their rejection of being oppressed as women (Bora and Günal, 2002: 8) (*see also* Altınay, 2000).

Kurdish women, whose political activism is the main focus of this thesis, came together and got organized around various organizations as well as journals from the mid-1990s onwards. The journals were *Roza*, *Jujîn, Yaşamda Özgür Kadın* and *Jin û Jiyan*[5]. Islamist women[6], on the other hand, got involved in political activities mainly under the roof of *Refah Partisi* (Welfare Party). They were also organized around different foundations like *Hanımlarımız İlim ve Kültür Vakfı* (Foundation of Our Ladies Science and Culture) (Çakır, 1996b: 756) or *Başkent Kadın Platformu*[7] (Capital Woman Platform).

Moreover, during the 1990s one can see a variety of journals published by feminists, namely, *Eksik Etek* (Deficient Skirt), *Martı* (Sea Gull), *Emekçi Kadınlar Bülteni* (Worker Women's Bulletin), *Özgür Kadın* (Free Woman), *Çağdaş Ana*

[5] For a thorough and comparative analysis of these journals *see* Açık (2002).
[6] For an interesting interview with one of the Islamist women, *see* Tuksal (2000; *also* 2001). Also for more on Islamic women's movement and/or activism in the 1990s *see* Eraslan (2002).
[7] For more information on Islamist women's organizations *see* Pusch (2001).

(Contemporary Mother) and *Dolaşan Mavi Çorap* (Circulating Blue Sock). However, they have not been given to general circulation (Çakır, 1996b: 756). Also a monthly journal, *Pazartesi* was started to be published in 1995 (Çakır, 1996b: 756).

One final remark about the feminist movement in Turkey in the 1990s is the fact that "project feminism" became the predominant mode of activism, which has been a general trend in the world. On the one hand, project feminism shifted the political issues to those of technical/ policy; on the other hand, it prepared the ground for reaching much more women. That is to say it has both pros and cons:

> The mode that was named as "project feminism" gained prevalence throughout the whole world in the '90s. This sort, in which the political goals were transformed to those of technical projects and in which militancy was transformed to being "activists", was criticized from various points of view. In our opinion, too, project feminism is standing as one of the most important problems before the feminist movement. However, it should be admitted that gaining prevalence and being able to get in contact with "other" women of the feminist movement that was composed of middle-class, educated and urban women, was realized by means of projects (Bora and Günal, 2002: 8-9).

As can be seen, by "project feminism", the feminist movement started to center on technical/policy issues. Its previous militancy was converted to activism. And it became more issue-oriented.

As the present illustration of the feminist movement in Turkey displays, a radical and autonomous feminist movement emerged in Turkey in the 1980s. Women, who openly defined themselves as feminists, got together in consciousness-raising groups. They marched for themselves. They questioned and opposed to the violence that women were facing. They questioned the heritage of the Kemalist ideological discourse on women's equality with men and they asserted women's difference. They struggled to be acknowledged as feminists. They translated books

on feminism into Turkish; in this sense, they composed a theoretical accumulation concerning feminist theory and politics. However, their activism was lessened in the 1990s and left its place to the institutionalization of the movement. Especially thanks to 'project feminism', the movement reached a larger number of women today.

Despite these radical and noteworthy accomplishments of the feminist movement, still there are significant drawbacks embedded in feminism in Turkey. In this context, for the present purposes of this thesis, ethnicity-blindness of feminism in Turkey comes to the fore as its major critique. In this thesis, this critique is developed with specific reference to the (in)sensitivity of feminism in Turkey towards Kurdish women[8]. In other words, the point of departure of this thesis is the argument that feminism in Turkey, until recently, disregarded, overlooked and/or failed to see the existence of a distinct set of experiences embodied in Kurdish women. Then the questions emerging here are as follows: What is the extent of this disregard? How were Kurdish women disregarded? In other words, what are some examples of this disregard? Before going into these questions, the most urgent question is the following: what might be the ground/basis upon which this disregard stands? Put bluntly, can there be a broader critical outlook of feminism in Turkey, an illustrative as well as particular moment of which is the fact that Kurdish women are failed to be seen as 'Kurdish women'? In what follows, I will begin with this last question about the 'why' aspect and then move to the previous ones.

One possible explanation could be that feminism did not clash with the State. Mrs. Nazik Işık (personal communication), who has been active in the movement starting with the Progressive Women's Association in the 1970s, states that feminism has not clashed with the State in Turkey. According to her, the closing down of the

[8] For a critique of 'Turkish feminism' as the 'watchdog of nationalism' *see* Mojab (2001).

Turkish Woman's Federation displays the fact that this clash indeed started in the Republican Era but it was prevented by the State. She goes on with indicating that the clash of the leftist/socialist women's activism and/or organizations in the 1970s did not follow the lines of "feminism" and "women's policies"; rather, it was an extension of the clash between the Left and the State. Coming to the 1980s, the state's main point of emphasis in internal security was "anarchy/terror" and therefore, the street protests that feminists were carrying out was perceived by the state, for example by the state's police force as the "cute and harmless activities of women". Furthermore, their demands were well in line with the modernization project prevailing in this country. Put differently, according to Işık, in the 1980s feminists' demands were well overlapping with the international responsibilities of the State or with the contracts which the State was not a part of, there was not lived a clash between the two; on the contrary, feminist demands were taken as a response to the need of modernization. As a matter of fact, states Işık, these demands were centering around sexist inequality in society and therefore, it adopted an approach that emphasized the commonalities among women, that is to say, it underlined the 'womanhood' as the common denominator of all women. Thus, it weakened the attempt of recognizing the differences among women of different social groups. About the 1990s Işık argues that:

> In the '90s, the main themes of the state in internal security were "the struggle against separatism (*bölücülük*) and Islamist fundamentalism (*irtica*)". I think that on the basis of this axis, the women's movement regarded 'secularism as a genuine matter of alliance" (the qualification within the quotation marks is Serpil Üşür's). And *in the context of "separatism" there was not lived an extended debate in the feminist movement; rather, it adopted an attitude that, to a significant extent, passes over it in silence* (Işık, personal communication) (italics added).

Undoubtedly, as Bora and Günal (2002: 8) indicate, "separatism" is the encoding of the Kurdish question, while "religious reaction" was that of the Islamic mobilization in Turkey. Since this thesis is about Kurdish women and their relationship with feminism in Turkey, the issue of Islamist women and their relationship with 'secular' feminists will not be elaborated here. According to Işık, another reason behind this is the fact that feminist women had, though not consciously, a low degree of interest in the issues other than the ones on their own agenda. Işık traces the high level of affiliation of the predominant majority in the women's movement with the State and its symbols to two very recent examples. In this sense, she refers to the debates in the meetings of CEDAW and Ka-Der in 2003 concerning citing the national anthem. Işık indicates that these debates were very harsh ones[9]. The harsh debates about which Işık informs us can be considered to illustrate what Laçiner states about the relationship between the state and society in Turkey:

> *There is a schizophrenic dimension in the relationship of society in Turkey (Türkiye toplumu) with its state and in the content of the perception of the state that occupies the central place in its political culture*. In this imagination, glorification and degradation, keeping away by fearing, alongside with hoping for help are telescoped. In this imagination, the thought comes and goes from one to the other -the reverse-. *This schizophrenic attitude is valid, with no exception, in every channel of the relationships of society in Turkey with its state* (Laçiner, 1997: 21) (italics added).

In order to be able to search for the reasons behind the disregard of Kurdish women by the feminist movement in Turkey, besides Işık's observation that feminism did not clash with the state, we need to take Yeğen's observation into consideration. Yeğen, in his quite thorough and elaborate analysis of the Turkish

[9] It is quite interesting that Bora (personal communication) also underlines the harshness of these debates by concluding that the issue of nationalism will be the breaking point for the feminist movement in Turkey.

state discourse on the Kurdish question, throws light upon how the Turkish state avoided recognizing the Kurdishness of the Kurdish question as in the following:

> The present study emerged out of dissatisfaction with the standard view that the Turkish state discourse is an ideological narrative which misrepresents the Kurdish question and conceals the exclusion of Kurdish identity. This standard conviction draws its strength from the striking silence of the Turkish state as to the 'Kurdishness' of the Kurdish question. *Any examination of the discourse of the Turkish state discourse reveals that the Turkish state has consistently avoided recognizing the Kurdishness of the Kurdish question*.
>
> *…Whenever the Kurdish question was mentioned in Turkish state discourse, it was in terms of reactionary politics, tribal resistance or regional backwardness, but never as an ethno-political question* (Yeğen, 1996: 216) (italics added).

Taken together with the aforementioned points which Işık and Laçiner raise, these three analyses can be argued to provide significant insights into an understanding of the disregard of Kurdish women by feminism in Turkey. Now comes the question of the extent to which Kurdish women were disregarded by the Turkish feminist women and how.

In the book edited by Tekeli (1995a), which is a compilation of the papers presented at Kassel University in Germany in1989 (Tekeli, 1995a: 15), there are ideas upon which this thesis draws. However, firstly let us look at what Nükhet Sirman, one of the authors in this book, says in a conference held at Ankara University in January 2003 about the symposium in Germany. She noted that a woman in that symposium had come up with the argument that Kurdish women had been oppressed and subordinated differently from their Turkish counterparts. Sirman, importantly enough, recognized in the conference that they, as Turkish women, all vehemently had opposed to this argument on the basis of the argument that they all, as women, had been undergoing the common experience of oppression and subordination. This anecdote shows the rejection of the existence and/or experience

of Kurdish women *as* Kurdish women by Turkish feminists, which receives some self-criticism today.

Furthermore, very limited studies are carried out on Kurdish women. In this sense, there is a notable gap in the feminist research in Turkey in terms of including varying experiences of 'women in Turkey'. There are some studies focusing on the relationship between gender and ethnicity in the context of Turkey. While one focuses on Circassian women in Ankara (Güneş-Ayata, 1998), the other one examines Bulgarian immigrants and Alevis (Güneş-Ayata, 1997). Undoubtedly, such an exemplification does not amount to argue that these are less important and/or not important at all issues to be handled. Rather what pointing out to these examples implies is the fact that no one single study on Kurdish women, who make up of an important number[10].

They were taken as "Eastern" and "rural" women (Ertürk, 1995; İlkkaracan, 1998; İlkkaracan and İlkkaracan, 1998) or as tribal women (Yalçın-Heckmann, 1995) but not as 'Kurdish women'. There is only one study (Yalçın-Heckmann and van Gelder, 2000) that concerns itself with Kurdish women. Yet it cannot be considered as a research conducted by the Turkish feminist circles. It raises notable points in terms of the place and role attributed to Kurdish women in the Kurdish nationalist discourse[11]. Yet still it cannot be said to be foremost concerned with the Kurdish women's experience, rather, their experience seems to have a secondary place compared to their role in Kurdish nationalism. In other words, their analysis seems to

[10] According to McDowall (1994: 37), in the late 1980s the Kurds constitute 19% (9.6 million) of the population in Turkey (about the number of Kurds in Turkey *also see* İçduygu et al., 1999). That is to say, then, Kurdish women's number was about 9-10% of the whole population in the late 1980s.
[11] For a harsh critique of this study by a Kurdish woman, *see* Kayhan (2000).

be seeing women's experience as in merely additive terms (Yalçın-Heckmann and van Gelder, 2000: 313-314).

And there has been a deadly silence in the feminist literature concerning Kurdish women's experience in Turkey in the 1980s and 1990s, suppressing it under the titles, 'tribal women' or 'Eastern/rural women'. Thus, it seems tenable to claim that, being an extension of the Turkish state discourse; the feminist research in Turkey reproduces and/or perpetuates the Turkish state discourse on the Kurdish question in the context of Kurdish women. In other words, rather than seeing the Kurdishness of Kurdish women, they study them under the occlusion of a tribal and/or regional issue but not as an "ethno-feminist"[12] issue. Therefore, it seems tenable to claim that despite its radicalism, *in the last instance* 'Turkish' feminism is the extension of 'liberal Kemalism' (Arat, 1992).

Despite these critiques, still one should not forget the fact that the feminist research as well as movement in Turkey does not have a homogeneous and/or monolithic picture[13] in their approaches towards women in Turkey, a fact, which will well be revealed in the chapter on the field research. Furthermore it was Sirman herself, quite meaningfully, who made the self-criticism that they had not been able to perceive the difference of the oppression and subordination of Kurdish women. Firstly, there might still be a conscious or unconscious disregard of Kurdish women in Turkey by some sections of the feminist circles and/or movement. However, there really *are* the ones who see this gap (*see* Bora, 1996; Bora and Günal, 2002; Altınay,

[12] By "ethno-feminist" I mean that ethnicity is a very important component of the issue at hand. I am wholeheartedly thankful to Mazhar Yüksel who led me to formulate this concept.

[13] For instance while in a course called *Türkiye'de Ataerkilliğin Çözümlenmesi: Kadın Çalışmalarının Temel Paradigmaları* (The Analysis of Patriarchy in Turkey: The Fundamental Paradigms of Women's Studies), which is taught at Ankara University, Kurdish women are visible, this is not the case with another course called *The Woman Question in Turkey*, which is taught at Middle East Technical University.

2000; also for the reflections of this seeing, though in a different context *see* Günal, 2001). However, the recent recognition of the existence and difference of Kurdish women by some Turkish feminists does not remove the undeniable fact that they *were* disregarded in the two previous decades by the feminist movement in Turkey. Secondly and most importantly, even though Kurdish women were disregarded by the feminist movement, and even though this is one of the common criticisms of Kurdish women, as the analysis of the field research of this thesis will show in the third chapter, it was the feminist movement and the accumulation that it constituted with the process of the second wave feminism in Turkey that have contributed much to the emergence and development of a feminist consciousness in Kurdish women. Two critical remarks need to be made here. The first is that undoubtedly such an assertion does not imply a crude cause and effect relationship. In other words, this point should not be read as a deterministic and/or reductionist one. As the findings of my study will make it clear, the politicized Kurdish women were getting involved in politics primarily in the Kurdish (nationalist) movement prior to the 1990s. With the beginning of the 1990s, however, they started to develop gender consciousness. The point that I would like to make here is the following: It seems possible to indicate that the underlying mechanisms and/or processes of such a questioning were a configuration of two powerful and dominant social and political dynamics. While one was the increasing acceleration of Kurdish nationalism from the 1980s onwards, the other one was the accumulations as well as achievements of feminism in Turkey.

The second critical point is the fact that one should not take my argument to mean that I construct a hierarchical positioning between Kurdish and Turkish women as, it might be argued, the former are presented to have 'learnt' feminism from the latter. The analysis, I attempt, it should not be forgotten, is far from such

implications. In this context, I find it necessary to note the following. Factually speaking, yes, Kurdish women were latecomers to the feminist political agenda compared to Turkish women. Yet one should also recall that Kurds are materially and non-materially are in an environment of insecurity and Kurdish women are even doubly insecure in comparison to Kurdish men (*see* İçduygu et al., 1999). They were much more behind the point where Turkish women start the life. Moreover, it should be remembered that in order for a Kurdish woman to come to the fore and speak as a 'Kurdish woman' there must exist some sort 'legitimacy'/recognition of the enunciation of 'Kurdishness'. Indeed this was one of the major contributions of Kurdish (nationalist) movement. That is to say, it brought the Kurdish question to the political agenda of Turkey and had an undeniable impact on the recognition of the Kurdish question. This, consequently, opened the way for Kurdish women to act as 'Kurdish women'. Emanating from their questioning of the patriarchy of the Kurdish movement, the separate activism of Kurdish women from the Kurdish movement can be called as the unintended consequence of the Kurdish movement. While the more obvious and deliberate contribution of the Kurdish movement was the fact that it attempted to modernize Kurdish women by emancipating them from the 'feudal', 'backward' and 'traditional' cultural remnants, its unintended consequence was the fact that Kurdish women started to question its patriarchal approach to women and thus, challenged it.

2.2 The Kurdish Question in Turkey

2.2.1 A Conceptual Framework: Ethnicity, Nation and Nationalism

Before going into the examination of the Kurdish question in Turkey, it is necessary to elaborate on the concepts of ethnicity, nation and nationalism, which will be often be used throughout this thesis. Eriksen provides us with a workable definition of ethnicity for the present analysis of this thesis:

> Ethnicity is an aspect of social relationship between agents who consider themselves as culturally distinctive from members of other groups with whom they have a minimum of regular interaction. *It can thus also be defined as a social identity (based on a contrast vis-à-vis others) characterized by metaphoric or fictive kinship. When cultural differences regularly make a difference in interaction between members of groups, the social relationship has an ethnic element*. Ethnicity refers both to aspects of gain and loss in interaction, and to aspects of meaning in the creation of identity. In this way it has a political, organizational aspect as well as a symbolic one (Eriksen, 1997: 39) (italics added).

What about the "nation"? Is there a difference between the concepts of "ethnicity" and "nation"? Yuval-Davis argues that there is not an *inherent* difference between the two, as they are both imagined:

> Basically, there is an inherent connection between the ethnic and national projects. While it is important to look at the historical specificity of the construction of collectivities, *there is no inherent difference* (although sometimes there is a difference in scale) *between ethnic and national collectivities: they are both the Andersonian 'imagined communities'* (Anderson, 1983) (Yuval-Davis, 1998: 24-25) (italics added).

Although there might be no necessarily inherent difference between belonging to an ethnic or national collectivity, as Yuval-Davis proposes above, there are important differences between ethnic ideologies and nationalism. As Eriksen argues:

> Like ethnic ideologies, nationalism stresses the cultural similarity of its adherents and, by implication, it draws boundaries vis-à-vis others, who thereby become outsiders. *The distinguishing mark of nationalism is by definition its relationship to the state. A nationalist holds that political boundaries should be coterminous with cultural boundaries, whereas many ethnic groups do not demand command over a state*. When the political leaders of an ethnic movement make demands to this effect, the ethnic movement therefore by definition becomes a nationalist movement (Eriksen, 1997: 35) (italics added).

This distinction is important to bear in mind since it provides the theoretical grounding for the differentiation that I will make between Kurdish movement and Kurdish nationalism in the next section. Gellner also suggests that nationalist movements pursue the congruence of the political and national units, as follows:

> Nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent. Nationalism as a sentiment, or as a movement, can best be defined in terms of this principle. Nationalist *sentiment* is the feeling of anger aroused by the violation of the principle, or the feeling of satisfaction aroused by its fulfillment. A nationalist *movement* is one actuated by a sentiment of this kind (Gellner, 1983: 1).

One can trace a similar account of nationalism in Hobsbawm:

> *Nationalism* is a political programme, and in historic terms a fairly recent one. It holds that groups defined as 'nations' have the right to, and therefore ought to, form territorial states of the kind that have become standard since the French Revolution. Without this programme, realized or not, 'nationalism' is a meaningless term (Hobsbawm, 1996: 256).

Moreover, Hobsbawm too, makes a distinction between nationalism and ethnicity, by emphasizing that the latter is less a political concept:

> *Ethnicity*, on the other hand, whatever it may be, is not programmatic and even less is it a political concept. It may acquire political functions in certain circumstances, and may therefore find itself associated with programmes, including nationalist and separatist ones (Hobsbawm, 1996: 257).

On the issue of the origins of nations and nationalism, in this thesis the approaches of Anderson, Gellner and Hobsbawm are taken as the conceptual

grounding primarily because they do not view nationalism in primordial terms; rather they emphasize that nations and nationalisms are the products of modernity and they are of a particular social and historical construction. For instance, Gellner puts industrialization as the prominent process that prepared the ground for nationalism, when he states that: "Nationalism is rooted in a *certain kind* of division of labour, one which is complex and persistently, cumulatively changing" (Gellner, 1997: 57).

Anderson, on the other hand, traces the roots of national consciousness and nationalism back to the development of print-as-commodity and in this development capitalism has the primacy (Anderson, 1983: 37). And, underlining the fact that nationality, nation-ness as well as nationalism are social and historical constructions, he puts the definition of the concept of the nation as follows: "It is an *imagined* political *community*- and imagined as both inherently *limited* and *sovereign*" (Anderson, 1983: 6) (italics added). It is *imagined* because an individual member of even the smallest nation will never meet or hear all of the other members of the nation. It is *limited* because it has finite boundaries and thus, it is exclusionary. In Anderson's words: "No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind [sic.]" (Anderson, 1983: 7). The *sovereignty* of the nation originates from the fact that it was born in the age of Enlightenment and Revolution, "which were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained hierarchical dynastic realm" (Anderson, 1983: 7) and were replacing the nation as the source of sovereignty in the embodiment of the sovereign state. And "finally, it is imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, *the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship*" (Anderson, 1983: 7) (italics added).

Hobsbawm takes the concept of the 'nation' and the associated phenomena with it; namely, nationalism, the nation-state, national symbols, histories and the rest

as a comparatively recent historical innovation (Hobsbawm, 1983: 13); put bluntly, as 'invented traditions' (Hobsbawm, 1983: 13). In this context, one has to look at what Hobsbawm means by invented tradition[14]:

> *'Invented tradition' is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past* (Hobsbawm, 1983: 1) (italics added).

Having briefly touched upon theories and conceptualizations of ethnicity, nation and nationalism, now I would like to make a few critical remarks regarding these mainstream texts on nationalism. First of all, it should be noted that these are quite noteworthy analysis in that they call for a conception of nation and nationalism not in essentialist and omnihistorical terms but rather they point out that they are the constructions of specific social and historical contexts. However, the fundamental problem in these three conceptualizations of the nation arises from the fact that it treats the nation as a coherent/consistent whole that demonstrates the very same characteristics in its each and every individual constituent member. On the other hand, they disregard gender differences, which act against women: "women do not reap long-term benefits as a result of their involvement in nation-building efforts" (Ranchod-Nilsson and Tétreault, 2000: 3). In Racioppi and See's words: "If the

14 Here it should be noted that the issue of nationalism is important to bear in mind not only in the case of Kurdish women, but also in that of Turkish women. This importance becomes more understandable when one recalls Işık's and Bora's (personal communication) references to the harsh debates concerning the citation of the national anthem in the meetings of the feminist women. This example is well illustrative of the need for en-nationing/nationalizing feminism in the context of Turkish women. In this sense nationalism will be a critical dimension of the relationship of Kurdish and Turkish women. By getting involved in political activities as independent women, Kurdish women can be said to present the function of litmus in terms of making Turkish women face their nationalist attitudes. That is why Bora (personal communication) indicates that the Kurdish question seems to be a serious differentiating point (*ciddi bir ayrışma noktası*) not only for Kurdish women, but also for Turkish women. Indeed she makes quite a significant point when she states that the breaking point of feminism in Turkey will be nationalism.

'nation' is imagined as a 'deep, horizontal comradeship', a 'fraternity' ready to die for one another, how do men and how can women belong to the national 'fraternity'? In what ways is the imagined community of the nation gendered? *Who imagines the nation*? When and how do women participate in this imagining" (Racioppi and See, 2000: 29) (italics added)?

2.2.2 The Context of the Kurdish Question

Having elaborated on the conceptual frames that will be helpful throughout this thesis, now let me continue with the Kurdish question in Turkey. Although the main focus of this thesis is the relationship of the politically active Kurdish women with feminism in Turkey in the 1990s, it does not seem possible to accurately paint this picture without also taking the development of the Kurdish movement into account especially in the 1980s and 1990s. Undoubtedly, their activism in the Kurdish movement becomes quite important within the scope of this thesis primarily because the Kurdish movement and Kurdish nationalism played an important role in the development of womanhood consciousness of the Kurdish women, irrespective of whether it evolved to a feminist one or not. This will be much clearer when the words of Kurdish women are heard in the chapter on the field research of this thesis. Therefore, one cannot get a better understanding of the relationship of Kurdish women with feminism in the 1990s' Turkey unless he/she looks into the development process of Kurdish nationalism in the 1980s and 1990s in Turkey. Both the Kurdish question and Kurdish nationalist movement are not recent phenomena in Turkey. On the contrary, they are deep-rooted social and political issues whose

origins can be traced back to the second half of the 19th century Ottoman Empire. Therefore, it is necessary also to look briefly at their origins.

Before going into the overview of the historical roots and development process of the Kurdish question in Turkey, it seems necessary to make a few points regarding some conceptual clarification. Throughout this thesis, the Kurdish movement is used in the following sense: taking the solution of the Kurdish question as the very central aim, the activities that are undertaken in political organizations, parties, publications, foundations, broadcasting and the like are considered to be within the confines of the Kurdish movement. Kurdish nationalism, on the other hand, is used to mean a more specific dimension and/or component of the Kurdish movement, while the reverse is not necessarily true. Put differently, the Kurdish movement cannot be reduced to Kurdish nationalism. The distinction between the two is derived from the fact that whether they have a claim on the state or not. Then there is still the need for further clarification as the meanings of the Kurdish question and Kurdish nationalism are not clear enough. Here it is useful to refer to Bozarslan, according to whom Kurdish nationalism and the Kurdish question neither can be handled independently of each other, nor can they be perceived as identical phenomena. According to Bozarslan:

> Kurdish nationalism emerges as a current that aims at establishing an administrative structure (autonomy, federation or a state) and that constituted symbols and a political discourse peculiar to itself. On the other hand, the Kurdish problem can be defined as a national and social problem of the Republican Turkey which excludes all sorts of identity and belonging other than Turkishness, and which gives place only to Turkishness in the context of history, culture and education, and which bans the symbolic sources of the other groups (Bozarslan, 2002: 841).

In this context, throughout the rest of the thesis, I will use the Kurdish movement in the meaning that implies the search of the solution to the Kurdish question. Thus, it

should not necessarily be equalized with the Kurdish nationalist movement, although the former accommodates the latter in its borders.

There can be identified two 'moments' that had very determinant significance in the evolution of Kurdish nationalism[15]. The first one was the establishment of the Republican Turkey in 1923 and the second one was the armed insurgence of the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) that started in 1984. Taking these two critical moments as the turning points in the historical development process of the Kurdish question and Kurdish nationalism, now I would like to go into its analysis in more detail.

The history of Kurdish nationalism can be traced back to the second half of the 19th century Ottoman Empire. However, the rebels in which Kurds were involved cannot be said to have been truly 'nationalistic' in nature. In other words, the rebels of the 19th century were more of tribal and religious characteristics rather than ethnic ones. These rebels were in the form of an opposition to the centralization policies of the Ottoman Empire. These policies brought about the Kurdish revolts and politicized the ethnic identity of the Kurds, as Yavuz puts it:

> Attempts at centralization during the nineteenth century politicized peripheral ethnic identities. *Most of the Kurdish tribal revolts against the central government resulted from tribal reactions to the intrusive and centralizing policies of the modernization policies of the Ottoman state and the Republic of Turkey*. These centralizing policies in terms of monopolizing violence and education threatened tribal autonomy and the interests of the *ağa* or *seyyid* (Yavuz, 2001: 5) (italics added).

As it can be seen, in the initial stages, in the Kurdish revolts there was an overlap of Kurdishness with the tribal and/or religious affiliation. In this context, one has to

[15] For a comprehensive history of Kurdish nationalism *see* Jwaideh (1999).

mention the revolt, which was led by *Şeyh Ubeydullah*, a local religious leader, in 1880. As Yavuz (2001: 5) points out, this was the first religio-tribal rebellion.

After the delimitation of the borders in the aftermath of the First World War, mainly the Kurdish-populated areas were divided between four countries; namely, Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. Yet I will concern myself, for the present purposes of this thesis, with the Kurdish question in the Republican Turkey. With the establishment of the Republic, the Kurdish nationalist movement also gets into an important stage, as was noted at the beginning of this section. This is due to the fact that a radical transformation from the Ottoman Empire, that was based upon the *millet* (religious community) system, to the Turkish Republic, which was visualizing the construction a nation and nation-state, took place. As it is known, the major social division in the Ottoman Empire was along religion rather than ethnicity and/or nationality. On the other hand, nationality became the very basis of the Turkish Republic. As Cornell puts it:

> [In the Ottoman Empire] *Collective identities were based primarily on religion –Islam at the broadest level and various religious orders and sects at the local level- regional or clan-based units. The Turkish republic, by contrast, was modeled upon the nation-states of Western Europe, particularly France*. It was guided by six "arrows" or principles enunciated by its founder, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk: republicanism, nationalism, secularism, populism, etatism and reformism. Among these, the first three principles form the foundations of the republic (Cornell, 2001: 2) (italics added).

Therefore, the establishment of the Turkish Republic has an important place in the historical evolution of Kurdish nationalism, particularly because it further fed the latter with its assimilationist policies, as İçduygu et al. note:

> *Since its founding in 1923, the Turkish Republic has pursued aggressive assimilationist policies towards its Kurdish minority*. The new republic was based solely on Turkish culture and identity, and hence did not permit the

> expression of Kurdish identity and language within its borders (İçduygu et al., 1999: 993) (italics added).

Similarly, van Bruinessen points out to these strict policies of the Turkish state in order to suppress Kurdishness, not only by the use of mere force, but also through a wide array of activities, like education and broadcasting:

> More important, and ultimately much more successful, however, were the more peaceful means to which nation-building regimes everywhere have had recourse: compulsive general education, general conscription to the army (for males at least) and state-controlled radio and press. *The ban on writing Kurdish, most strictly imposed in Turkey and Iran, restricted communication across state borders and ensured that the Kurdish language did not develop into an appropriate vehicle for communication in modern, urban contexts* (van Bruinessen, 1998: 2) (italics added).

Here it is important to recall Houston's argument that "*discourse on the Kurdish question often frames the Kurds, rather than the Turkish state, as the problem*" (Houston, 2001: 1) (italics added). Thus, once one recognizes the 'hyper-nationalist vision' (Chaliand, 1994: 30) of the nation and nation-state building strategies of the Kemalist revolution in addition to its 'aggressive assimilationist policies' (İçduygu et al., 1999: 993), then one has a significant tool in the comprehension of the nature of the Kurdish revolts in the 1920s and 1930s' Turkey. As Chaliand informs us (1994: 36-39), until 1938 there were seen three Kurdish rebellions in Turkey, namely, in 1925 *Şeyh Said Rebellion*[16], in 1930 the Mount Ararat Revolt and in 1936-38 the Dersim Revolt. As İçduygu et al. indicate:

> *These early rebellions, according to most observers, were probably more religious and tribal in nature rather than ethnic nationalist*. Religious and traditional Kurds had little appetite for a secular Turkish republic and tribal leaders resented the new state's encroachments on their authority and power (İçduygu et al., 1999: 993) (italics added).

[16] For more about *Şeyh Said* Revolt *see* Olson (1989).

The years following the Dersim Revolt in 1938 were quiet years until the early 1960s. Indeed Bozarslan (2002: 850) calls the years between 1938 and 1959 as the years of fatigue as Kurdish nationalist movement was short of power after the process of a fifteen year-revolt. The religious and tribal characteristics of Kurdish nationalism started to secularize with the 1960s, when it was articulated with the leftist/socialist movements of the time. As Yavuz notes:

> *The secularization and transformation of Kurdish identity took place within the broader leftist movement in Turkey in the 1960s and 1970s*. This secularization of Kurdish identity took place as a result of interaction with socialist ideology (Yavuz, 2001: 9) (italics added).

Here one should note that there were some points upon which the Kurdish and Turkish leftists disagreed with each other. This disagreement in the end led them to organize separately. The point of disagreement was about the Kurdish question. As Entessar indicates:

> For Kurds, the goals of socialist revolution and Kurdish nationalism were not incompatible; they had to be pursued simultaneously. *The Turkish left, on the other hand, considered Kurdish insistence on ethnic recognition as counterproductive, divisive and ultimately detrimental to the survival of the political left*. They contended that ethnic recognition would be achieved under the proletarian leadership of a socialist Turkey. The two sides parted company and the Kurdish left sought to organize separate political parties (Entessar, 1992: 92) (italics added).

Kurdish nationalism came to a significant phase in the 1980s and especially in the 1990s. This significance emanates from the emergence and armed insurgence of the PKK. As Mango informs us:

> The PKK produced its first programme, in which it defined itself as a national democratic revolutionary movement based on an alliance of workers, peasants and intellectuals, aiming at destroying ‘colonialism’ and creating ‘a democratic

> and united Kurdistan' which would eventually be based on Marxist-Leninist principles (p. 52) (Mango, 1994: 988).

Despite the straightforward declaration of the aim of establishing a separate state, one can see that this was not the same position that was adopted later on. For instance, Gunter refers to a statement made by Abdullah Öcalan, the longtime leader of the PKK:

> When he declared a unilateral ceasefire in March 1993, for example, Öcalan stated, 'Turkish-Kurd brotherhood is about 1000 years old, and we do not accept separation from Turkey'. Rather the Kurds in Turkey 'want peace, dialogue and free political action within the framework of a democratic Turkish state'. Complete democracy would not only solve the Kurdish problem within Turkey, but also fulfill the ultimate goal of Atatürk- the founder of the Turkish Republic- for a modern democratic Turkey that would be accepted as a member of the West (Gunter, 2000: 4).

However, as İçduygu et al. also note: "Whether the PKK still espouses a separate Kurdish state is unclear. Some of the movement's statements support a federal-type solution for Kurdish demands in Turkey" (İçduygu et al., 1999: 994). Whatever its ultimate goal, it is a historical fact that the PKK politicized and radicalized ethnic nationalism in Turkey, be it Kurdish or Turkish, as Yavuz argues:

> *The PKK played a critical role in raising Kurdish political consciousness, establishing a web of networks in and outside Turkey to recruit militants, undermining the religio-tribal structure of the region by presenting new opportunities for the middle class and urbanized Kurdish youth, and unexpectedly popularizing and consolidating Turkish nationalism in Turkey. One of the most important unexpected outcomes of the PKK was the deepening politicization of Turkish nationalism* (Yavuz, 2001: 11) (italics added).

Öcalan was captured by the Turkish military in Nairobi, Kenya on 16 February, 1999. Although the first reaction of the PKK to the arrest of Öcalan was the use of mass violence (Yavuz, 2001: 15), later on "at the 7th Extraordinary Congress of the

PKK in Northern Iraq on 7 February 2000, the leadership of the PKK decided to give up the armed and adopt a democratic struggle" (Yavuz, 2001: 16). However there was established KADEK, which is seen as the continuation of the PKK, and still it continues an armed struggle with the Turkish military forces, although it is less intense compared to that of the PKK.

As Yavuz argues, the Kurdish question lapsed into a different phase with the European Union Helsinki Summit, which was held on 10-11 December 1999. At the Summit, Turkey was declared to be a candidate to join the Union. This candidacy necessitated Turkey's implementation of the Copenhagen political criteria with which the Kurdish question became a European problem, as Yavuz indicates:

> The European Copenhagen political criteria (passed at the EU summit in Copenhagen in 1993) require full implementation of democracy, human rights, the rule of law and the protection of minorities. On the basis of the Copenhagen criteria, the EU asked Ankara to reform its legal system and solve the Southeast problem with peaceful means. This represents a turning point in Turco-EU relations and has created an optimistic environment to end the tragic conflict, which resulted in 30.000 deaths[17] and a cost of $100 billion (Yavuz, 2001: 16).

The candidacy of Turkey to join the EU and thus to put the Copenhagen political criteria into effect seem to be an important step in the way to the solution of the Kurdish question in Turkey particularly when one recalls the recent adaptation packages that were acknowledged by the Turkish Grand National Assembly. According to these laws and regulations, broadcasting and private tutoring in traditional local languages and dialects, which also pertains to Kurdish, is allowed.

[17] For a research on the Turkish and Kurdish mothers who lost their children in the armed conflicts in this process *see* Sancar (2001). Also for some interviews with some Kurdish women among *Cumartesi Anneleri* (Saturday Mothers) who lost their children after having been put under police custody *see* Günçıkan (1996).

2.3. Engendering the Kurdish Question in Turkey

Having briefly made an overview of the emergence and development process of the Kurdish question in general and Kurdish nationalism in particular, now I would like to make a few points regarding the enunciation of the Kurdish question per se, within the scope of this thesis. Looking at what has been said until now, it seems possible to agree with Barkey and Fuller when they state that:

> *Our discussion of the "Kurdish conflict" emphasizes the assumption that the nature of the problem is basically one of ethnicity and identity rather than primarily economic or terrorist in nature* (Barkey and Fuller, 1997: 61) (italics added).

However, this study does not restrict itself with such an assumption on the grounds that it is still far from grasping the relatively accurate picture of the question at hand. What this further proposes is the fact that the dominant literature concerning the Kurdish question seems to be ill sided by a totalizing assumption that all Kurds are one single monolithic mass that is completely the same or that the only divisions among Kurds are those of tribal, linguistic, territorial, religious and sectarian. Put bluntly, the division in terms of gender seems to have been disregarded by the dominant literature concerning the Kurdish issue[18]. However, gender comes to the fore as an important factor, which, while influenced to a significant extent by Kurdishness, also in turn determines the oppression and/or suppression originating from being Kurdish. In other words, gender has a determinative place and role in

[18] For an exceptional as well as unique research *see* Mojab (ed.) (2001).

terms of the assimilationist and oppressive policies that have been depicted so far in this chapter.

One notable example can be given from the research that was carried out by İçduygu and his colleagues (1999). In their quite significant study that is based on the data from the 1993 Turkish Demographic and Health Survey (TDHS) they put their vary basic argument as in the following: "*Our key claim is that the Kurdish population in Turkey is relatively much worse off than the Turkish population in the country*" (İçduygu et al., 1999: 991) (italics added). According to the authors, the material and non-material insecurity of the Kurdish population is a key variable, which prepares the ground for an ethnic nationalist mobilization. While the material needs are seen as the access to "land, income, education, health, possessions, state resources and even life" (İçduygu et al., 1999: 996), the non-material ones are "language, culture and belonging" (İçduygu et al., 1999: 997). The example that I would like to give is about their findings on the education of the Kurdish men and women:

> *The data on education, in addition to the fact that no Kurdish schools exist, are revealing: although primary education is compulsory in Turkey, as the TDHS data reveal only 61 per cent of Kurdish men and over 38 per cent of Kurdish women have completed primary school; on a regional basis, what is also striking is that among those living in the eastern regions, two Kurdish men in every five, and two Kurdish women in every three, have received no schooling at all. Many Kurdish men only learn Turkish when they are drafted into military service* (İçduygu et al., 1999: 1003) (italics added).

These are quite important observations. First of all, the authors deserve a legitimate appreciation as they firstly note that there are no Kurdish schools. In this way, they *see* and *recognize* the right of the Kurds to receive education in their own language. Put differently, they appreciate their difference. Secondly comes the big gap between

Kurdish men and women in terms of the material and non-material security they have. Although the two groups, i.e. men and women, are of the same ethnic origins, they differ in their material and non-material security to a significant extent. As the case of the military conscription of men shows, due to the different gender roles, Kurdish men are relatively in a more advantageous position than women. This emanates from the fact that they are of different gender[19].

Another notable example is provided by Thomas, who notes that:

> *Eren Keskin, a Kurdish lawyer, is representing more than 100 Kurdish women who are taking Turkey to the European Court of Human Rights for rape and sexual harassment at the hands of the Turkish state. She asks a simple question: if this many are prepared to come forward having been denied justice in the domestic courts, how many women has this actually happened to? The answer is thousands* (Thomas, 2003: 2) (italics added).

We do not exactly know the answer of Keskin's question. Yet what we for sure come to know thanks to Keskin's question is that Kurdish women, due to their gender undergo a more oppressive process compared to men of the same ethnicity. In other words, Kurdish women experience double material and non-material insecurity, as they are the bearers of both Kurdishness and womanhood. In this context, the major proposition that this thesis underlines is that there is the need for engendering the Kurdish question and placing an emphasis upon gender-blindness of the dominant literature on the Kurdish question.

[19] Indeed this is the only point where one might raise a criticism against the authors: throughout their very insightful study they seem not to take gender as a variable that accounts importantly. In the example that is mentioned above, they only give the difference between men and women as if accidentally rather than as a distinctive variable. It seems possible to speculate that if the data of their research is handled with an engendered eye, then it is much more to reveal than what it does at the moment. Undoubtedly, such a speculation does never amount to devalue its insightful analysis.

Another point that needs to be made is about the impact of Kurdish nationalist movement on Kurdish women[20]. Kurdish nationalism has played quite noteworthy roles in terms of the mobilization of Kurdish women. Alongside Kurdish men, Kurdish women too, were mobilized under the umbrella of Kurdish nationalism. They got involved in political activities initially via Kurdish nationalism. They were socialized in these nationalist circles. They learnt to put the terms of a political debate within the Kurdish nationalist environments. In this sense, Kurdish nationalism has an undeniable importance in the context of the political mobilization of Kurdish women.

The contribution of the Kurdish nationalist movement to the politicization of Kurdish women can be examined at two rather paradoxical levels. On the one hand, verifying Jayawardena's (1986) argument[21] that the simultaneous rise of feminism within the nationalist movements was seen in the Third World, Kurdish nationalist movement contributed to the development of womanhood consciousness of its female members. In other words, Kurdish nationalism attempts to eradicate the 'feudal', 'backward' and 'traditional' Kurdish social and cultural practices and understandings concerning the woman question. This is the positive contribution of Kurdish nationalism. The second dimension is closely related with the fact that, as McClintock argues: "*All nationalisms are gendered*" (McClintock, 1993: 61) (italics added). Furthermore, McClintock, strikingly enough, emphasizes that:

> Excluded from direct action as national citizens, women are subsumed symbolically into the national body politic as its boundary and metaphoric limit: 'Singapore girl, you're a great way to fly. Women are typically construed as the symbolic bearers of the nation but are denied any direct relation to national agency (McClintock, 1993: 62).

[20] It should be noted here that some parts of the observations presented in this section are derived from the in-depth interviews, which will be analysed in detail in the third chapter.
[21] I am thankful to Handan for reminding me of this point.

In a parallel vein, Wilford states that:

> In surveying the relationship between women and nationalism it is difficult to escape the conclusion that it turns on male-crafted conceptions of nation and national identity (Wilford, 1998: 1).

Therefore, it seems possible to claim that Kurdish nationalist movement too, despite its modernizing attempts, has been male-dominated and it has disregarded or has not attached much importance to its female members. It has had a desexualizing attitude towards the women active in it. Or it failed to see its female members as women. On the contrary, it looked at them as if they were men. Such a failure in seeing the difference of women, consequently, has brought about awakening of women and their questioning of the Kurdish nationalist movement. They started to question and criticize their male friends' patriarchal attitudes towards them. And in this way, in addition to its above-mentioned positive contribution, the ground is prepared for Kurdish women's developing a womanhood consciousness. This second dimension can be called as the unintended consequence of Kurdish nationalism.

CHAPTER III

A FIELD STUDY ON KURDISH WOMEN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH FEMINISM IN TURKEY IN THE 1990S

3.1. Methodology

I conducted in-depth interviews with nine Kurdish women. Seven of them live in İstanbul and one lives in Turkey –she did not specify any city-. The other one participated in the interview via email from Britain where she has been living for nearly three years. I got in contact with these women through feminist and Kurdish networks. After the first contacts, I got in touch with the others by means of a snowball technique.

The major source of the questions of the in-depth interview (*see* Appendix) was the three Kurdish women's journals, namely, *Roza*, *Jujîn* and *Jin û Jiyan*. In addition, my readings concerning feminism in general and feminism in Turkey in particular were other sources of information for these questions. There were a total of 35 questions in the interview. Some of them had their sub-questions. The general structure of the questions can be divided into three parts: the first set of questions is composed of the ones that try to find out about demographic characteristics of the respondents in addition to their social and political backgrounds. The second set of questions is in search of the interviewees' views on and conceptions of feminism in general and feminism in Turkey in particular. The third set of questions is a rather

broad one, which specifically investigates Kurdish women's experiences. These questions extend from daily experiences of Kurdish women to their political activism and their relationship with Kurdish nationalism as well as the feminist movement in Turkey.

The interviews took place mostly in the respondents' or their close friends' homes or in the women's organizations where they have currently been active. Only some part of one of the interviews was conducted in a café. The interviews lasted from about one and a half to three and a half hours. They were tape recorded and then transcribed. The nine Kurdish women whom I interviewed are in their 30s and 40s. Only one is primary school graduate, two of them are high school graduates and the rest are university graduates. One of them has a Master's degree. Some of them are single, some married and some divorced. All of them have rural backgrounds, however they have been living in the urban areas of Turkey, particularly in İstanbul, for a period of time that is ranging from one and a half to almost four decades. The political activism of some started in the 1970s and 1980s, yet with no exception, all of them have been politically active in the 1990s in Turkey.

Before going into the analysis of the field research, there is the need of some conceptual clarification. In this context, what politics and the political, in addition to political activism, mean within the scope of this study needs to be clarified. Throughout this study, the political and/or politics is not used in the sense of a narrow conventional politics; instead an alternative conception and definition of politics is introduced. As Corrin informs us:

> With feminist political criticism a shift can be seen from traditional thinking about politics as concerned solely with structures, functions and activities to feminist views of politics as the working out of **power relations**. Vicky Randall outlines two main and contrasting views (1987: 10):

> 1 **traditional**- politics as an *activity*. It is the conscious deliberate participation in the process by which resources are allocated amongst citizens;
>
> 2 **alternative**- politics as a process of *articulation*, a working out of relationships within an already-given power structure.
>
> In this way it is not just the business of government – political parties, elections, voters and government policies- that is political, it is also the politics of people's lives- family, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexuality, upbringing, class and so on (Corrin, 1999: 9-10).

Following this alternative conceptualization of the political, this thesis will use political activism in the sense of getting involved in politics.

3.2. Analysis of the Data

First of all it is important to note that it is difficult to analyze such a complex, varied and diverse population of Kurdish women. Despite their small numbers, they present a diverse political picture, which is a difficult task to conceive fully. Though this study does not claim to provide the full picture of the political activism of Kurdish women in Turkey in the 1990s, it provides significant findings concerning both a characterization of Kurdish women's relationship with feminism and Kurdish nationalism in Turkey during the 1990s and what Kurdish womanhood experience is like in Turkey.

All of the informants in this study are not only ethnically Kurdish, but also and more importantly, most of them had been active in the Kurdish movement in the 1970s and 1980s. Indeed some of them are still active in the Kurdish movement, though with a sensitivity to the woman issue in the movement. Certainly all of them

had not been active in the Kurdish movement but their socialization was realized in a socio-political environment that had a pro-Kurdish political stance. Therefore, they were, to say the least, sympathetic to the Kurdish movement.

As far as the present investigation is concerned, it seems possible to delineate four broad categories from within which Kurdish women's relationship with feminism can be analyzed: *non-feminist*, *feminist nationalist*, *Kurdish feminist* and *feminist*. Despite the risk of being fallen within the trap of totalizing and/or generalizing Kurdish women's political activism in terms of their relationship with feminism, it is necessary and, to a certain extent, a useful way to apply such a classification with the reservation that such a categorization neither means that all of the Kurdish women in Turkey are politically active along these lines nor does it mean that the ones in the same category are totally the same in their political ideas, inclinations and preferences. Such cautiousness, however, will not prevent me from looking for the very similarities among them besides their differences.

Several important points concerning such a feminism-centred categorization needs to be made here. Firstly, it should be noted that one of the fundamental tenets of this thesis is that feminism, both as a theory and movement, is a significant 'moment' in the history of social and political theory. Therefore, it is used as a yardstick to facilitate one's understanding of Kurdish women's specific experience of oppression and subordination in Turkey. Yet such a use of feminism as a yardstick should not necessarily lead one to think that the categorization made within the scope of this study is one that reproduces a different hierarchical positioning among women. That is to say, this study, in spite of this core conviction, does not envalue the feminist category while devaluing the others. Put bluntly, while feminism is taken to mean "*an important epistemological tool for understanding and opposing*

all forms of domination- a feminist standpoint" (Hartsock, 1983: 283) (italics added) within the boundaries of this thesis, it would not be any self-consistent to give a new form of domination among women. Such a categorization might well be possible on the grounds of, for instance, nationalism and/or nationalist consciousness, too. However, this thesis takes feminism as its yardstick due to its core tenet indicated above.

Secondly, I attempt such a categorization not merely on the basis of the self-perceptions and/or self-identifications of the respondents, but more importantly, I took the inner consistency of their answers to categorize them, without falling into the trap of the 'dominant voice' in the study. In this sense, for instance one respondent might have defined herself as a feminist but I might have categorized her as a feminist nationalist or she might have defined herself as a feminist or Kurdish feminist and again I might have categorized her standpoint as feminist nationalist. Some of them remained in line with their self-perceptions, while some others did not. As will be clear in the following pages, the major determining factors in such a categorization are their perceptions and relationships with feminism and nationalism in general and the feminist movement and Kurdish movement in Turkey in the 1990s in particular.

Thirdly, a rough characterization of these four categories had better be made here. From the non-feminist towards the feminist categories, the critique of the feminist movement in Turkey becomes lessened, while the opposition towards nationalism becomes much more radical. Here it can be said that the scale can be divided broadly into two parts, but these two parts in turn can be sub-divided into two. While the non-feminists and feminist nationalists fall into one side of the scale,

Kurdish feminist and feminist ones share the other side. As was noted before, the tools that are used are their perceptions of feminism and nationalism.

Another point is about the clarification of the concepts that are used in the categorization of the women in this study. The women in the non-feminist category present a critical distanciation from feminism. They openly do not define themselves as feminists and they raise criticism to the perception and practice of feminism in Turkey. On the other hand, for the woman in the feminist category, her identity of being a feminist precedes all of her other identities. However, she adds that her identity of Kurdishness and her environmentalist identity are also important for her. There is also the need of elaborating on what feminist nationalist and Kurdish feminist mean in this study. In using feminist nationalism, I follow West's conceptualization/definition. According to West:

> Various types of feminist and nationalist movement activists on both a grassroots and elite level work today for the identification with their national group –be it based on shared history, culture (language, religion, ethnicity, styles, fashions, tastes), sense of place (the region), or kinship- while simultaneously fighting for what they define as the rights women within their cultural contexts.
> *What makes these movements and the analysis of them different is that women (re)constructing the meanings of both nationalism and feminism from a women-centred viewpoint* (West, 1997: xiii) (italics added).

In other words, West defines feminist nationalist movements, some examples of which are elaborated upon throughout his study, as follows:

> social movements simultaneously seeking rights for women and rights for nationalists within a variety of social, economic and political contexts. This definition encompasses a much larger framework than viewing nationalism within limiting terms of "culture" (various groups could fight for a region yet not share a culture) or "ethnicity" (many struggles have religious or ethnic components) or even economics when it lacks a cultural component (West, 1997: xxx).

Unlike West's operationalisation of the concept of feminist nationalism that implies a movement, this thesis rather makes of it in the context of the individual cases in order to be able to accurately analyse the differing standpoints of Kurdish women, which oscillate between their gender and ethnicity.

Coming to the Kurdish feminist category, it can be said that the watershed between the feminist nationalists and Kurdish feminists in particular, between the two broad categories is the fact that, with the Kurdish feminist standpoint, the harshness of the critique directed at the feminist movement starts to be lessened and nationalism starts to be viewed in exclusionary terms.

Under the light of these considerations, it should be indicated that two of the respondents are viewed as non-feminists, four of them as feminist nationalists, two as Kurdish feminists and one as a feminist. I will present their views by renaming them as follows. The non-feminists are Ayşe and Zeynep. Feminist nationalists are Hatice, Zehra, Melike and Elif. Kurdish feminists are Esma and Semra. Lastly, the feminist one is Filiz. In what follows, I will examine these four different standpoints that Kurdish women present not with a separate information on each category but along three issues. The first is how Kurdish women view feminism in general and the feminist movement in Turkey in particular. In this context, how they define feminism and themselves in addition to their relationship with Turkish feminist women will be examined. In short, the analysis of the first issue aims at delineating their positioning vis-à-vis feminism and the feminist movement in Turkey. The second issue investigates for their conception of nationalism as well as what the picture of their position vis-à-vis Kurdish nationalism in Turkey in the post-1980 looks like. In the third section, the specificity/difference of the Kurdish womanhood experience will be

shed light upon. In other words, this section will be an attempt to illustrate the specific experience of oppression and subordination that Kurdish women undergo.

3.2.1 Kurdish Women's Positioning vis-à-vis Feminism and the Feminist Movement in Turkey

Not all the Kurdish women whom I interviewed define themselves as feminists, nor do they all have the same view and/or conception of feminism. To illustrate, two of the participants, namely the non-feminists, who have been politically active under the umbrella of Kurdish nationalism from the 1970s and 1980s onwards, see feminism, as it is understood and practiced in Turkey, as being an *anti-men* and *enemy-of-men* ideology and thus, they distance themselves from being feminists. Instead the women in this group believe in an ideology of womanhood that goes beyond the feminism that is conventionally understood in Turkey and which privileges a better life in which women and men support each other and fight for the same cause of liberation. Ayşe, one of the non-feminist women, for instance, states that:

> I am looking somewhat differently at the phenomenon of feminism that is on the agenda today. *I mean I do not agree with being a crude feminist, with the idea of a crude rejection of men*. Rather, my idea, the idea that I adopt is a woman's ideology that even transcends feminism. *Because if a life is to be conceived, it should be conceived as a shared life.* I agree more with being able to walk together with men as comrades (*yoldaş*) and to live together in those happy days waiting to be created than with adopting a crude rejection of men (italics added).

Accordingly, feminism is conceived as a merely crude rejection of men and it is understood to be a visualization of a life in which men are excluded. In this sense, it is necessary to note that the two non-feminist women share the same image of feminism, which they criticize. That is to say, in line with the above quotation, feminism does not only mean to be the enemy of men but it also means to assert the superiority of women over men, with which these women disagree. Yet they still believe in the consciousness raising of men and they may bring their own definition of feminism, as Zeynep, the other respondent in this category puts:

> Let me start from here: The women in Turkey understand feminism in a very different way. *I mean they perceive feminism as being against men, as being the enemy of men, as getting organized against men. I do not take feminism as such. I think that it is also somewhat necessary to raise men's consciousness. There should not be a concern of women to prove that "we are superior over you", while men say, "we are superior"* (italics added).

Interestingly, Ayşe and Zeynep's knowledge of feminism in general and its history in Turkey in particular was quite limited to the extent that it was meaningless to ask them questions about the feminist movement in Turkey. Zeynep states that:

> *I do not search about feminism very much; in plain words, if I say that I know a lot about feminism very well, it would definitely be wrong. I tried to read a few books about it; they did not contribute to me much.* I think that women define themselves as feminists despite the fact that they have not reached a certain political consciousness and that they are not very close to feminism (italics added).

As it can be seen, the fact that some Kurdish women have a negative view of feminism emanates from the prevailing image of feminism in society. An example of this claim about the misreading and malpractice of feminism by Turkish feminists is given by Zeynep as follows:

> Let me give you an example from my perspective; maybe things like that pushed me a lot (away from feminism). In one of the workplaces that I used to work, it was about the year of '83, a very prestigious woman professor, one of the leading names of the feminist movement in Turkey, by behaving very antithetically, let me say, by sitting very wrongly, by talking in a very wrong manner connoted that feminism was that. Her point of departure was that if men could do these then, we, as women, too, could do these, and in this way she was trying to organize women. This was an economist woman. This seemed to me unbelievably wrong. And thus, in my opinion, many people very negatively were affected from this. They perceived feminism as such. Of course those people made a self-criticism later on. I do not know whether they expressed the falsity of this but things like that pushed me very much away from feminism. *I think that the ones who look at feminism in this way directed women in Turkey. That is why I did not very much see myself among them* (italics added).

As it can be seen, there is not a complete prejudice against feminism but the view of feminism is derived from the respondent's experiences with the feminist women in Turkey. Among the respondents only two of them had such a view, and due to the reasons that they mentioned they do not define themselves strictly as feminists. Thus it seems appropriate to define them as non-feminists.

However, all of the rest define themselves as feminists, or independent feminists or Kurdish feminists, and they all attribute a positive meaning to feminism irrespective of how it is practiced and/or understood among other women in Turkey. For instance, one of the "feminist nationalist" women, Elif emphasizes that feminism is a worldview that aims at women's liberation in very general terms. Moreover, she indicates that there is not a monolithic understanding of feminism as follows:

> In my opinion, it is not possible to speak of one single feminism for all women. A lot of factors determine our understandings of feminism, the ones such as class, race, ethnic group and geography being the leading ones. According to the experiences in most of the women's movements in a variety of countries, very roughly speaking, there are four main lines of feminism. They are liberal, socialist, radical and black. Yet today it has become more flexible and the mixture of some sorts is possible. *I find radical and black feminism close to*

> *myself, but still I define my own feminism as anti-racist feminism* (italics added).

Anti-racism and the opposition to racism has an important place in the discourse of the "feminist nationalist" women. Melike, who is another "feminist nationalist" woman, too, puts anti-racism as the precondition of being a feminist. She, too, believes that feminism is the best ideology for the liberation of women like the previous one, but still she places a reservation on feminism at a definitional level due to its insufficiency in terms of ethnic emancipation of women. It is possible to read her reservation within the context of the questions of difference in feminism, which is quite difficult to overcome:

> For me feminism is a woman's ideology; an ideology that points to women's emancipation. Yet in my opinion, it is apparently one of the best ideologies… *There is a deficiency in feminism as well. I mean in ethnic base, in terms of ethnicity its discourse on women's emancipation is not very complete. But I think that it is the best woman's ideology that has been ever seen up to now* (italics added).

Apart from such a critically adopted feminist standpoint, all Kurdish women view feminism as an emancipatory movement. In a similar vein another feminist nationalist woman stated: "I think of feminism as a movement that investigates the reasons of the oppression of women, and in this sense, it will liberate women". The "Kurdish feminist" women, on the other hand, emphasize domination and subordination and talk about the disadvantaged as they include not only women but also racial and ethnic groups. For example Semra's understanding of feminism is characterized by an emphasis placed upon the necessity of feminism's being on the side of the disadvantaged:

> To me, feminism, as a movement should always be on the side of disadvantaged groups or movements. For example, in the struggle against

> racism, women's movement played very serious roles. I mean in America, in the activities, organizations against racism, the women's movement has a very serious role. And in my opinion, *feminism in every country in which it exists, has to put on an attitude on the part of the oppositional groups or the groups that are suppressed, be it ethnic groups or other minorities. This is my viewpoint, my understanding of feminism* (italics added).

It is also important to note that the other "Kurdish feminist", Esma sees feminism as a worldview that is critically concerned with all forms of domination and subordination in the world:

> *To me, feminism is a point of view, which investigates and questions all forms of domination and subordination in the world; centering on the multiple oppression that women experience among other forms of oppression, it argues for the fact that there should not be any oppression at all* (italics added).

Feminism is conceived as the struggle with the sexist system by Filiz, the "feminist" woman:

> For me feminism is to oppose and to try to change the sexist system that deeply affects and harms, that is to say, negatively affects and harms firstly women and then all the living creatures. Feminism is the basis of, the ideology of, trying to change this.

In comparison with the others, the feminist woman whose words are cited above presented the deepest and the most comprehensive information on the history of the feminist movement in Turkey. For instance, she was the only one to enunciate *İlerici Kadınlar Derneği* (Progressive Women's Association) and its importance in terms of the organization of the feminist movement in Turkey. In a similar vein, she was the only one to read the line traced back to the Ottoman times as a continuity of the women's movement in Turkey:

> After the 70s, for example, the Progressive Women's Association, in my opinion, undersigned many successes. In my opinion, there is a vein coming from the time of the *Tanzimat*, *Meşrutiyet*; the time of the Ottoman. *I mean the feminist movement gained acceleration very much after the '80's but there were very many institutions, groups, organizations, energy, and synergy, everything that was feministic (feminizan) and that would give clues to feminism*. For example, Progressive Women's Association was the group that was the most extensively organized at the social level that is ever seen up to now. It was a group that had 25.000 members: an extraordinary number! Until now, none of the women's organizations reached this number. Even in the world they are very very few in number. Only in India there are those overwhelming numbers. Therefore, I very much see Progressive Women's Association as a milestone (italics added).

Now comes the question of the relationship between Kurdish women and the Turkish feminist women. Indeed this is another similar point on which all of the Kurdish women agree. As will be clear throughout the following pages, the assertion that Kurdish women are excluded and/or discriminated against and/or looked down upon and/or are not understood by the Turkish feminist women due to the latter's nationalist bias[22] is a very common criticism, by Kurdish women in this study, despite the fact that the extent of the harshness of their criticism changes as we wave from the "non-feminist" category to the "feminist nationalist", to the "Kurdish feminist" and then to the "feminist". According to Zehra, one of the "feminist nationalist" women, this could be explained by means of the Kemalist ideological nourishment of the feminist movement in Turkey[23]:

> **I*** **:** *I do not think that they were sensitive to the Kurdish question*. Their attitudes towards the pressures on the Kurds were not that positive in the political sense. More truly, they were not so sensitive. They were not touching on that field very much.

[22] This is a point that is criticized by Mojab (2001) and Hassanpour (personal communication). While the former sees Turkish feminism as the watchdog of nationalism, the latter indicates that for Turkish feminists: "the interests of the (Turkish) nation was more significant than the interests of women."
[23] For a similar critique *see* Tanrıkulu (1997).
* Interviewee

R[**] **:** According to you, how can this be explained?

I : In my opinion, *the Turkish women's movement takes its nutrition from Kemalism*. *I mean I do not think that it has something that is completely distinct from Kemalism or that is constructed upon its rejection or that criticizes it. There are things from Kemalism* (in it); *there is a racist approach in the Turkish women's movement as well* (italics added).

In other words, with varying harshness, all Kurdish women make the point that there is a degree of nationalist bias of Turkish feminists. For instance, Elif, one of the "feminist nationalist" women, states that the "Turkish feminist movement" did not examine the relationship between racism and feminism in the 1980s:

> [In the 1980s, the Turkish feminist movement] spoke of a political organization and liberation that cut all women. But this turned out not to be possible in practice. First of all, *Turkish feminists did not touch on the relationship between sexism and racism on this soil where racism and all sorts of discrimination are deep-rooted* and where they have been started to be talked about anew, and where there are multi-lingual/cultural/ethnic identities. They did not see that there was experienced a difference between different ethnic identities and between women of oppressing and oppressed nations. They assumed that the common denominator as being oppressed as women was enough. Secondly, although the existence of the classes was recognized, they were forgotten and they supposed that they addressed all women. Yet it was limited with educated, middle-class women (italics added).

Elif was the only one among the respondents to speak of the separate organization of Armenian women in the second half of the 1990s and the "Turkish feminist movement" did not recognize them. In a sense, she gives the cues of their racism in the case of Armenian women:

> In the second half of the 1990s, Armenian women, too, (especially the young woman students of Bosphorus University) constituted their own feminism by organizing separately. They had many activities such as March 8 activities, writing brochures (broşür çıkarma) and conducting research on the history of Armenian women. *Yet the Turkish feminist movement did not show any interest*

[**] Researcher

> *and solidarity towards them, on the contrary, it almost denied them to exist* (italics added).

Likewise, Zeynep, one of the "non-feminist" respondents, states that they, as Kurdish women have not been welcomed in the meetings and/or platforms of feminists and that the Turkish feminist women asked them to leave their Kurdishness aside when they all came together for a meeting:

> *We participated in some activities together with the feminist women. We have been together in some movements and actions. But let us say, when we acted together in the actions like May 1st and March 8th, they strictly wanted us to leave our Kurdish identity out. We are still living this*. For instance we, as Kurdish women, propose Kurdish slogans to be cried. We want slogans, placards that include Kurdish women but they generally reply that 'This is the women's day, this is for March 8th'. They tried to prevent us in such affairs; we lived this in almost all the meetings. That is why Kurdish women felt obliged to act separately in certain affairs. There are many points that we disagree with them (italics added).

In the following quotation, as a Kurdish feminist woman, Semra, points out to the prejudice of Turkish feminist women and their reluctance in accepting their Kurdishness:

> *As I said, of course they had prejudices. These prejudices were not in the form of: "You are a Kurd" etc. but rather it was like: "Why are you talking like this? We have got common problems. What is the need for such words?"* For example there were some periods during which the word 'Kurdish' was consciously not used (italics added).

Here what one of the Kurdish women in the "feminist nationalist" category, namely, Zehra feels that Turkish feminist women behaved as the "big sisters"[24] of Kurdish women, pointing out to an asymmetrical relationship between Turkish and Kurdish women within the women's movement:

[24] For a parallel criticism directed at Turkish feminist women *see* Canan (1998).

> They made me feel even more oppressed. *I think that this was something like behaving like a big sister (ablalık yapmak) to us*. In the same vein, they started to do more things than us about our own problems, about the problems that we live. They started to forum opinions or to talk in our behalf. *Moreover, they became like the spokesperson of the Kurdish women. This is what I mean when I say to be like a big sister to us* (italics added).

Another feminist nationalist woman, Hatice, similarly, indicates that Kurdish women were behaved as if they were guests:

> In the beginning, as I told before, *they did not pay attention to us very much. They really did not*. I mean in those several meetings of ours, for example it was in a general meeting, there were all of the women's groups. *They did not really give us the chance to talk. I mean they behaved as if we did not exist*. At that moment we could not use our initiative. Why could not we do it? *I mean it was like their place, it was as if they constituted the basis and we were just watching like guests*. Perhaps we had not internalized much (italics added).

Melike, another feminist nationalist woman, indicates that, from the 1980s onwards, the feminist movement in Turkey did not develop any sort of approach to the Kurdish question in general and did not problematize Kurdish women's experience of oppression and subordination in particular. Furthermore, she provides one with a significant cue for an understanding of the reasons behind this blindness:

> I think that the women's movement in Turkey did not take any risk in the demands, actions and organizations related to the Kurds. This is very important. It does not still take a risk. It does not still much take risk...
>
> *There was the state against the Kurds. If you are on the side of the Kurds, the state will stand against you. You may prefer this. Yet they did not. I think that the feminist movement in Turkey in that sense was not on the side of the Kurdish women or the Kurds* (italics added).

Although some other respondents declared that the feminist movement in Turkey has been blind to the Kurdish question and Kurdish women's experiences, still they put some reservations to such a complete blindness, bearing in mind the specific social

and historical circumstances that characterized Turkey in the 1980s. In other words, they seem to leave a room for not being fallen within the trap of a naive sort of anachronism. On the other hand, the above quotation from one of the feminist nationalist women seems to be harshly criticizing feminism in Turkey in regards to its blindness towards the Kurdish question. Although it is a harsh critique, one can see that it is not totally stripped of accuracy primarily because this quite challenging critique well overlaps with what one of the leading figures of the feminist movement in Turkey, namely, Nazik Işık observes as a Turkish feminist woman. According to Işık, as was noted in the first chapter of this study, feminism has not clashed with the state in Turkey. Thus, one can argue that the relationship of Kurdish women with feminism in Turkey cannot be adequately characterized without also problematizing the relationship of the feminist movement with the Turkish state. The important point here is that one cannot and should not be entrapped with a generalizing/totalizing manner. In other words, one should not forget that there is not a unified/homogeneous/monolithic feminist movement as such in Turkey. Elif, one of the "feminist nationalist" women, underlines the partition of the feminist movement with specific reference to their attitudes towards the Kurdish women:

> In 1993, a group of feminist women in İstanbul published a notice that opposed what was going on in Kurdistan because of the force of the state and they made a press statement. Also some women in this group became members of DEP, symbolically. In addition, it is possible to say that the attitude of the *Pazartesi* and of some of the women working there was positive. *Apart from these ones, it is possible to say that Turkish feminists stood away*. It is possible to say that by overlooking, they had a chauvin attitude. *The ones other than the radical and socialist feminists, demonstrated a racist attitude and they panicked by saying "The homeland is going out our hands."* (italics added).

The level of the critique directed at the feminist movement women lessens in the discourse of the women in the "Kurdish feminist" category, unlike the ones in

that of the "feminist nationalist". To illustrate, one of the "Kurdish feminist" respondents, Esma states that she is not understood well by the Turkish feminist women than being consciously excluded by them, a fact, which, she argues, emanates from their different experiences:

> **I :** *Not exclusion, but there are instances when I am not understood*. For instance, our experiences in the context of the relationship with the state, the relations at the workplace, the relationship between the wife and the husband, mother and child relations are quite different. *When I express these, filled with astonishment, Turkish feminist women ask: "Really? Are there things like that? Can it ever be real?"*
>
> **R :** What is it then that makes your experiences so different or what is the difference that makes them get so surprised?
>
> **I :** For example, the fact that my father is an *agha* of a village, that my mother is my father's fourth wife, that while men are put in place of human beings, women are never ever considered as human beings, that women only exist to serve men and that I am treated roughly during these conflicts (italics added).

According to Semra, the other "Kurdish feminist" respondent, the women's movement in Turkey conceived Kurdish women only in terms of their womanhood, without very much seeing their Kurdishness, despite the idea that what feminism offers is to live together by acknowledging the differences that divide women further and further:

> There is this claim of feminism: to exist together with our differences. *Now, we also want to be together with our differences. I mean we want our difference to be seen. Because, to be a woman, too, is a difference but to be Kurdish is also a difference*. And then another one might come to the fore and say that to be a homosexual is also a difference. Then another one could say that to be religious is also a difference. Our identities are always composed of the lines that are parallel, and intersecting. I mean my identity of being a woman simultaneously has the points that intersect with my identity of being a Kurd. Here, these intersecting points of mine are what essentially make me who I am. Now when I enter an environment, when I enter Turkey's women's movement, I intersect with them at one point: I intersect as a woman, with my identity of womanhood. *Yet I have got another intersecting point of mine: being Kurdish.*

Because I am not only a woman over there. Naturally, I also experience something else that makes me who I am and that transforms my thoughts. Now the friends here say: "All right, we are merely women, this is enough for us". But this is not enough for us. What will we do with the things that we live in terms of both being a woman and our ethnic identity, that is, the things that we live as Kurdish women? I mean does not this concern the others (italics added)?

As it can be seen, Kurdishness is enunciated as a difference that shapes the experiences of Kurdish women as much as being a woman.

One can see that there are not only the criticisms of the feminist movement in Turkey but also there is placed an emphasis on some positive points regarding their approach to Kurdish women. Such positive remarks start to be made by women in the Kurdish feminist category, as seen in Semra's following words:

I : I think that feminism in Turkey still has many problems at some points.

R : For example what?

I : They did not give voice to social problems. Perhaps they could not. For example let us say they could not voice the issue of the Kurdish problem or the violation of human rights: they could not give very serious consideration to these. *But still I think about this subject as follows: I mean perhaps the group to be the least criticized is again the women's movement. I mean when we think of the other civil society movements, I think that the most concerned group about this issue has been the women's movement. I mean for example at least during the organizations of the meetings/actions, Kurdish women very openly discussed with the Turkish women or the women who were from Turkey (Türkiyeli kadınlar) about these: that they had got Kurdish demands, that Kurds had their own demands, that they wanted to express Kurds' demands and the issue of language. For example in all the meetings that were organized by the independent women, Kurdish speeches were made. But we cannot see this in any other organization in Turkey, I mean this is something to be counted as a very rare thing*… I mean in this sense the women's movement is the group to be the least criticized. Perhaps they did not give much voice but I think this, too, is something that will be discussed in time, I think that this is a process that is still going on (italics added).

In a parallel vein, what the other "Kurdish feminist" respondent, Esma states at this point connotes that the prevailing blindness of feminism in Turkey is not the result of its conscious prejudice, but rather it is due to the broader social and historical circumstances in Turkey. As she says, this can be seen in the sincere efforts of Turkish women to recognize Kurdish women's condition:

> **I** : In my opinion they were too distant from Kurdish women to see their reality. Yes, they were distant from the Kurdish question and the Kurdish woman. They did not recognize it. They had to recognize it much later and *they wanted to recognize it*.
>
> **R** : Why did they have to?
>
> **I** : Because a very hot war was going on in this country. There were very many reflections of this war on daily life, the media and on many fields. And it was within life to the extent that it could not be disregarded; it was striking. People started to think and talk about this issue, and in the meantime, the Kurdish woman was noticed anew. They had to speak and *then there became some women, who paid sincere efforts and who questioned in order to recognize the Kurdish woman* (italics added).

As can be seen, the tone of the critique of Kurdish women lessens and lessens as one moves through Kurdish feminist category. As can be seen in the following answers of the Kurdish woman in the feminist category, namely, Filiz, the further lessening of the critique of the feminist movement can be found in the argument that feminism has been coming into existence in the 1980s and thus, the feminists could not simultaneously reach all the social problems in Turkey. Yet still according to her, one of the lacking issues of the feminist movement in Turkey was its deficiency concerning Kurdish women:

> *Another deficiency was, in some Turkish feminists' self-criticism, about Kurdish women. I mean the women constituting half of the Kurds who constitute half of this country. I do not know the exact number but it is a high one when you consider the population of Turkey*. I mean if the problem was the

> womanhood condition, then there was not displayed any effort for the womanhood condition of the women belonging to this ethnic group or national identity. For one reason or the other, their breath was not strong enough, or their mind was not developed enough; for one reason or the other, they were unable to strip of their nationalist identities (italics added).

As it can be seen, contrary to Kurdish women in the other categories, Filiz, the only woman in the feminist category, does not put nationalism as the outward reason behind the blindness of the feminist movement towards Kurdish women. She goes on by stating that there are not only ethnic but also a variety of other differences that further and further bring about inequalities among women and that are still waiting for being explored and studied:

> This country is a very different one; there are a lot of other ethnic groups. The Kurds are the largest, the Turks are the largest. There are two largest groups. But apart from these, *there are other groups. There are big imbalances between the regions. There are differences in economic, social and cultural terms. The Black Sea Region is also a very different place. The Mediterranean Region is also a very different place. But feminism and feminists could not reach these places. As a movement it could not reach. As an entirety it could not reach* (italics added).

What Filiz points out is the fact that there have been many issues that the feminist movement has not been able to concern itself with. In other words, there are not only differences in ethnic terms among women in Turkey but also they are divided in many other respects. Put bluntly, according to her, the disregard of the Kurdish women is one among many other issues that have not been adequately and/or fully handled in the feminist movement in Turkey, which is its prevailing imperfection. She indicates that she does not even expect the feminists of the 1980s to be concerned with the ethnic differences among women in Turkey as they had more urgent and/or existential concerns:

> I *do not expect such a thing from the '80s because I cannot. Because they were not able to do that. They were running. They were struggling to come into being. I mean they were buffeting with themselves*. They were really in the process of starting breathing. They were in a very intensive process of coming into being and legitimating their feminist identities. It is very difficult to be a feminist. I mean the process of being a feminist is very difficult. In that process you get engaged with a thousand and one things. And since feminism emerged with the Turkish women in Turkey, in my opinion, *in the period of the '80s they were solely concerned with themselves* (italics added).

As might be noticed, Filiz, as a feminist (and then Kurdish) woman insistently underlines the fact that the inadequacy of the feminist movement towards the Kurdish question or the Kurdish women was not a result of a deliberate overlook and/or disregard in terms of ethnic identity/belonging. One factor, as was mentioned above, is that the feminist movement was struggling to exist. Was it only because it was concerned with its existential fight? Was not there any nationalism in the attitudes of the feminists towards the Kurdish as well as the Kurdish woman issue? Filiz replies as follows:

> *I think that there was nationalism*. In my opinion, there was nationalism but it was not a nationalism as follows: *it was not a nationalism that was at the level of denial; it was an objective nationalism*. This country is a nationalist country. Even if you are a feminist you take your share from it. *What I mean is that there was not a special blindness, a deliberate rejection*. Moreover, as I said before, the battle of life already took those women's energy. I mean they were engaged with themselves and they were struggling for survival against others. *They were trying to say, "We are here" and at that point to expect from the feminists some thing that does not exist in this country seems to be a criticism at a level that they do not deserve. That is the point that I want to make. In this country nobody does this. Kurds are killed, Kurds are dying, Kurds are assimilated. It is asked as: "Why did not feminists oppose"? But no one opposed to it, how could feminists* (italics added)?

Important points are made here. Feminists are defended on the basis of 'objective nationalism' that prevails in this country. Therefore, it is argued that they are not deliberately denying the existence of the Kurds. Another notable point here is that

the woman in this category states that one should not expect too much from the feminists in the 1980s as they were trying to come into existence and to be acknowledged with their feminist identities. Then what about the 1990s? What were the feminists' attitudes towards the Kurdish women like in the 1990s? The same woman responds:

> *But when we come to the '90s, to me, very rapidly, the feminists, since they are feminists, started to think of Kurdish women. And the feminists did this*. The leftist men did not do this. I mean, as a feminist, as a Kurd, *I was participating in the movement of the '90s very actively and very consciously, and in that period what I saw was extraordinary. I mean extraordinary in that sense: I had relations in a way with the leftists, also I had relations in a way with the Kurds, also I had relations in a way with the men but I saw the sensitivity concerning the fact that Kurdish women had a different form of oppression and that they had a different womanhood condition nowhere else as much as Turkish feminists were concerned with it* (italics added).

Here the emphasis is placed upon being feminists. In other words, in a sense what is implied here is that the feminists, due to their ideological stance, cannot be insensitive and/or blind to women's problems:

> Feminism has theories that give place to differences, believe that everybody is valuable and defend the fact that, irrespective of ethnic origins, race, class and status, all women suffer violence. Therefore, the feminists acted in the '90s with this equipment, and equipped with this knowledge, *it was the feminists who approached Kurdish women*. *I have heard them many times saying that there are Kurdish women's differences, that their language is banned, that this is a violence- one form of violence* (italics added).

As can be seen, what is proposed by Filiz here is that feminism can be and indeed, feminism *is* the very common ground upon which all women, regardless of the differences that divide them further and further, can well meet. She also criticizes the Kurdish women for being too impatient in criticizing their Turkish counterparts,

while she directs criticism at the latter for their being laziness in learning about the Kurds:

> I think that we have not waited enough for each other. I mean Turkish feminists did not study, read and learn about the Kurds. However, they are not closed-minded women in my opinion. *They are feminists and they know the importance of difference, they know its legitimacy and they are open to all these*. However, I think that they did not sufficiently put forth an effort. On the other hand, I think that Kurdish women behave very much impatiently and they have high expectations from the Turkish feminists. But still when you think of the wide range of the oppositional sections, from the anarchists, to the environmentalists to the leftists etc.- the sections that oppose to the system, to the state and want this life to be changed, it was again the feminists who took the first step. In none of the oppositional sections I did run into any debate that was maintained at the level which we went into in our *Bağımsız Kadın İnisiyatifi* (*Independent Woman Initiative*)… *Turkish feminists were affected by the coming into light of the Kurdish women. They were very much impressed. They got astonished. Yet they very much did racism. There were the ones who overlooked. But also there were the ones who saw. This is very important… I think that the majority in the movement tried to see this* (italics added).

There is a deep trust and belief in feminism throughout these words and in the fact that the feminists are *in principle*, in a sense, open to and respectful for the differences among women. In this way, Turkish feminist women and the feminist movement are not accused of consciously disregarding Kurdish women's existence; on the contrary, they are seen as the most eager section among the oppositional groups to recognize the Kurdish womanhood condition. Furthermore, she criticizes Kurdish women for their too high expectations from the Turkish feminist women. Importantly enough, she also underlines the fact that these issues cannot and should not be elaborated upon without taking the encompassing social and historical circumstances into consideration, that is, without looking at the war that used to continue until the end of the 1990s:

> I cannot think of feminism and the Kurdish question independent of the stages of the war, that is, the stages of the war. The war is something that blocks

everybody. *The war incites racist attitudes, nationalist attitudes… It was, as I said, the feminists who tried to go beyond this* (italics added).

As it can be seen, all Kurdish women criticize the indifference and/or blindness of the feminist movement in Turkey towards Kurdish women but one can see that in their discourses this criticism becomes smoother as one moves from the "non-feminist" to the "feminist" categories. The 'smoothness' in the feminist category emanates from two points: the first point is that while criticizing the feminist movement, one should not be anachronic in his/her evaluations. The second is that the Turkish women *are* not all the same in their attitudes towards Kurdish women and certainly there are the ones who try eagerly to understand and recognize Kurdish women. Nevertheless, such a point which the feminist in the study makes, should not make one disregard the ones who are harshly judging the feminist movement in Turkey in an anachronic way or that they are judging all the Turkish women as 'nationalists'.

3.2.2 Kurdish Women's Positioning vis-à-vis Nationalism and Kurdish Nationalism

Because they have socially and/or politically have Kurdish backgrounds, all of the Kurdish women who participated in this investigation had been either a member of or very close to some Kurdish political organization or formation prior to the 1990s. Yet with no exception, during the 1990s, all of them have been politically

active with an emphasis on their gender identities, be a feminist one or a womanly one. As was noted before, not all of them define themselves as feminists. The ones, who do not define themselves as feminists, rather prefer to say that they are politically active in the Kurdish movement in addition to being sensitive to the woman question. Such a common background of theirs, that is to say, having been in relation to the Kurdish political movement prior to the 1990s, well provides us with the opportunity to position them vis-à-vis nationalism in general and Kurdish nationalism in particular.

Some of the Kurdish women have a rather positive approach towards nationalism. They belong to the "feminist nationalist" category. First, they differentiate between racism and nationalism; they put racism as the extreme version of nationalism and thus, what is to be avoided, as indicated by Hatice:

> *I mean a human being who loves his/her nation without arriving at racism is a nationalist. His/her nation, homeland, I mean I do not know, his/her soil…*When becomes racism, nationalism goes to very dangerous dimensions (italics added).

Then they support nationalism, as Zehra's words show:

> *Nationalism is, outside of racism, not to see one's own national identity as superior over others, nor is it to reject/deny it.* [Nationalism is] t*o be able to protect one's cultural values or national identity* (italics added).

They support nationalism when it means the protection of one's self that belongs to an oppressed nation, and thus, they see nationalism as quite legitimate. This is a point that Melike makes as in the following:

> To me, nationalism is to be a member of an oppressed people and to fight for freedom. I mean, including one's own, to fight for the freedom of that people… *For me nationalism is legitimate because I am a member of an oppressed*

> *people, I am in no way free*. I can neither use my language, nor can I live my traditions, nor can I live in my own country; right? Nor can I dream in my language, nor can I imagine in my language. Until you are 5, or 6, while you do not know one Turkish word, all of a sudden you are told: "You will learn Turkish, you will forget [your own language]". Now this is racism. This is racism. On the other hand, *mine is to protect myself. If this is nationalism, I mean if to protect oneself is nationalism, yes, I am a nationalist. I am protecting myself because I am denied to exist* (italics added).

Put differently, there is not a straightforward advocacy of nationalism for its own sake; but rather to be a nationalist is a result of the imposition of the circumstances. This is what Zeynep, one of the "non-feminist" Kurdish women says:

> Perhaps *it is not completely true to say that I am a Kurdish nationalist from my political point of view but I care very much about the interests of the Kurdish nation and for this I fight*. I mean I fight not only for Kurdish women but also for the Kurdish people. As a Kurdish woman, I perceive as my duty the Fight against the ones who deny its existence. Circumstances have forced people to be a little nationalist. It is necessary not to think too much in terms of nationality. Perhaps this was true 20 years ago as well. I think that there was the necessity of fighting for the peoples of the world, fighting for the oppressed peoples of the world. I still think like that but as I say, *as far as you are not accepted and you are rejected, it is unavoidable to slip towards that side. You feel obliged to fight for your people. Thus, you approach a little nationalistically; you approach the events more in a nationalistic sense* (italics added).

However, Semra who falls into the category of "Kurdish feminist" does not view nationalism in such a positive sense. On the contrary, she views nationalism in quite exclusionary terms. In other words, according to one of them, nationalism assumes that some nations, thanks to the fact that they come from a certain national origin, have the priority of taking advantage of the resources; and in the same vein, some other nations, since they are not of that certain national, are deprived of the allocation of resources. Furthermore, according to Esma, the other respondent in this category, nationalism is seen as a different version of racism:

I *: In my opinion nationalism is to defend the superiority, yes, the superiority of a nation*. Almost to the extent that it can be called racism.

R : Then nationalism and racism are…?

I : They are close to each other, not the same.

R : Then what is racism?

I : I think that racism is more about the skin of the body. I think that it has some biological dimension. Nationalism is more about the national. If you are from the nation A, it is the most superior nation (italics added).

Similarly, according to Filiz, the woman in the "feminist" category, nationalism is something against both women and feminism and thus, it is a threat that women should be cautious of:

As a feminist, *I see nationalism as something against women, something against feminism. I mean it is a concept and condition that feminism cannot accept. Consequently, I am an anti-nationalist*. It is something that threatens feminism, I see it as something that feminism should be careful about; I see it as an issue that it should take care [gözetmek] (italics added).

Not only the conception of nationalism in negative terms, but also the view on the relationship between feminism and nationalism is another point that differentiates Kurdish women from one another. Some see no necessary tension and/or opposition between feminism and nationalism. According to them, feminism and racism rather than feminism and nationalism are opposite of each other. For instance, Esma argues that they are the opposite of each other:

In my opinion there is no common denominator of nationalism and feminism. About its reason, as I said before, nationalism advocates that some nation or some people are the most superior. All the other nations are below it. I mean it brings a hierarchical concept to the agenda. But in the feminism which I

> *perceive, there is the search for humanity, in which there is no hierarchy, there is not the bottom and the top* (italics added).

Filiz, the woman in the "feminist" category, in a somewhat more nuanced and/or elaborate way, points out that feminism and nationalism are not opposite, but they are two conditions that exclude one another:

> I think that rather than being opposite, feminism and nationalism are two conditions that exclude each other. There is nationalism in every aspect of the life, just like eating and drinking. Consequently, it is not something that feminism or I, as a feminist, can reject in advance. Simply put, I am Kurdish, and as a Kurd I have been assimilated, I am being assimilated, I am imprisoned in another culture, I am a migrant. All these are very much related with the Kurdish identity; it is related with the Kurdish identity as much as it is related with the woman identity. And in this sense, feminism does not exclude, or my feminist identity does not exclude it, but this is something that cannot precede my feminist identity. *This, I should eliminate. One of my aims in life, one of my feminist aims should also be this* (italics added)

It seems tenable to claim that Kurdish nationalism played a very significant role in the process of the development of womanhood consciousness in its members. In this sense, what one of the "non-feminist" respondents, namely, Ayşe says is very much illustrative of this argument. The initial involvement and current participation in political activities of one of the Kurdish women has been along Kurdish nationalist lines from the beginning of the 1980s until the mid-1990s. In other words, until the mid-1990s, the basic motive underlying her participation in politics was nationalist consciousness rather than her gender identity. That is to say, previously she used to emphasize the importance of the political struggle, i.e. Kurdish liberation:

> *When I initially involved in politics, frankly speaking, I got involved solely from within a national consciousness. I mean, in the event, every one of us was oppressed, but we were not aware of the fact that we were also oppressed as a sex. I mean not only me, but also many of my female friends, lived these experiences. I mean, although we were in a political party we could not say that we moved with(in) the identity of woman* (italics added).

But this changed later on. Her and her friends' awakening to their difference from men and their disadvantaged position vis-à-vis men in terms of their gender identity was realized through and within the boundaries of their political organizations. Though the respondent says that she was not initially motivated by some gender concerns during her participation in politics, recently there has been a significant change in the approach to women of her political organization. This was a point that was underlined by most of the other respondents as well. In other words, many of the other respondents pointed to the fact that the political organization that the Kurdish woman at hand is affiliated with, has been undergoing noteworthy transformations in terms of its approach to the woman issue. That is why it seems important to quote at length the conversation at this point:

> **R** : What was it that facilitated or pushed this transformation of both you and your male friends? I mean what influenced you regarding the woman issue? For example, as far as I understand you were different 5 or 10 years ago.
>
> **I** : Yes yes, it passes from recognizing ourselves. I mean, in the past, we…
>
> **R** : I mean is this only a result of an inner questioning? I mean self-questioning, or were you affected from outside? For instance let me say: "We were affected by the feminist movement in Turkey." For example can we say this?
>
> **I** : No, not from such an influence. I mean we seriously started to get to know ourselves, to search ourselves. Becuase in the past, in fact, while in politics or in real life, when we looked in the mirror, we used to look at ourselves with the eyes of the male. I mean this is not true only for the Kurdish woman.
>
> **R** : Then what happened which made you look at yourselves as women?
>
> **I** : I mean everyday there were discussions on this topic in the political struggle in which I was involved, and also some scientific research was there. Indeed it needs to be expressed frankly. There are ideas and definitions about women,

> about which Mr. X [the political leader] wrote, there are his books. We, too, get and read them. In these books, especially the ideas about women have been very mind broadening for us. I mean it developed in us something that helped us understand ourselves. These books are an incredible friend in the analysis indeed. I mean where did women lose, how is the situation of women today?… In these books, there are serious explanations concerning women. I mean I think that these explanations have been very useful in terms of recognizing ourselves and in terms of handling more consciously the problems that we live as women (italics added).

There seems to be an irony in the above quotation. It is the male leader's influence and orientation that contributed to the development of gender consciousness in the women who are mobilized in that political organization. Indeed one might well argue that even if it contributes to the development of womanhood consciousness, it cannot be taken as a 'true' or 'original' development of women's consciousness primarily because the terms that are made use of in this discourse are far from a feminist one. Why? It is still impossible to disregard the fact that women's emancipation movement rose within the nationalist struggles in the Third World (Jayawardena, 1986), regardless of whether it developed a feminist consciousness or not. The context of the debate is not, however, the discourse analysis of the Kurdish nationalism on the 'woman question', the question is about how Kurdish women relate themselves with the male-dominated nationalist movement. In this case, Ayşe seems to have developed a womanhood consciousness, in spite of the fact that male leaders paradoxically in a sense, initiate it without problematizing such a situation. On the other hand, Zehra, one of the "feminist nationalist" women remembers with regret a parallel case that she experienced in her organization. She told about a women's branch or commission that they once had constituted. She added that its leader was a man. She told this with regret and with a critical eye directed at her organization. Moreover, all the other Kurdish women, too, criticize the male

domination of the Kurdish nationalist organizations, and most probably would criticize the present woman's relationship with her organization despite the fact that it is acknowledged that the political organization, of which she is an active member, has been moving away from its patriarchal attitudes and approaches.

Interestingly, Zeynep, one of the "non-feminist" women drew a correlation between Kurdish men and Turkish socialists of the Turkish Workers' Party in the 1970s. She argued that just like Turkish socialists, who disregarded the Kurdish issue for the sake of socialist goals, Kurdish men seemed to be displaying a similar attitude in the case of Kurdish nationalism and women, which brought about a different organization of Kurdish women from Kurdish men:

> Shoulder to shoulder struggle of women and men together, that is okay, but women have noticed that men, Kurdish men, too, behaved just like Turkish socialists in the past. I can say this on my own as well as on the behalf of very many women. In my opinion, the need and benefits of women's separate struggle emerged... *Not breaking completely off the Kurdish men, after we believed in the convenience of acting independently, we started to get organized separately* (italics added).

As it can be seen, women's independent organization from men does not necessarily imply the total prevalence of a feminist point of view. In other words, getting differently organized from men does not mean that they are totally independent from men in their political activism. On the contrary, that Kurdish women get organized 'independently' is owed to Kurdish nationalist organizations as the latter gave birth to the former, as Zeynep notes:

> Again it [woman's movement] is born from within that movement [Kurdish movement]. From within the Kurdish movement is also born the Kurdish women's movement. If the woman in the Kurdish movement does not reach a certain consciousness, then the Kurdish women's movement cannot emerge. *I*

> *mean it is born within the other but it also has to be independent* (italics added).

Zeynep indicates that although Kurdish women's independent organizations are conceived as the supplementary and complementary by-product of Kurdish political organizations, still they are believed to direct the Kurdish movement, when it matures:

> The Kurdish women's movement maybe is the supporter of the other Kurdish movement, I mean, the real Kurdish movement, perhaps it complements it. *Yet perhaps it* [Kurdish women's movement] *will direct it* [Kurdish movement] *in the coming years* (italics added).

Here it can be noticed that the 'Kurdish political movement' as enunciated in their discourse implies that it is a 'male' political organization. Kurdish women's 'independent' organization seems to be also directed at the goal of proving women's 'existence' and capability, which, in turn, will enforce the Kurdish movement. In other words, Kurdish women's 'independent' organization is legitimated on the grounds that it will strengthen Kurdish political movement as seen in the following quotation from Zeynep's words:

> *I mean if we can give woman consciousness to our men as well, teaching them that woman is an entity of her own, that she is able to stand on her own feet, then the Kurdish movement will be strengthened. I am saying this for all movements. If all the movements conceive the existence of woman and that she can do something…* If all the movements come to understand that women can do some thing, then it becomes possible to move ahead together, shoulder by shoulder (italics added).

Despite such a dedication to the importance of the Kurdish women's activism on the grounds that it will enforce the Kurdish movement, it is clearly seen that they are not emptied from their gender identities. This is most obvious in their questioning the

attitudes of Kurdish men under the roof of the same organization. Then what was the experience that they lived in these political organizations[25] prior to getting organized as women? Another way of putting is that what is it that led them, as women to get organized? In Zeynep's words:

> *They were keeping us out. They were seeing us as if we were men. They were expecting us to behave like men in every way. Their viewpoint is very different*…I mean the wrong approach of men, their looking completely with male ideology. At the moment when we noticed this, we realized that we could be with them in the political sense, but in order to prove ourselves both to us and to them, to prove that we existed, *we should get organized separately*. We are still with them in the political sense, but *of course as women, there should be a separate organization of ours*, and for that reason we thought that we should be able to express ourselves in that way (italics added).

Zeynep also tells about some experience of hers within the Kurdish nationalist organization as follows:

> For example let us say that there will be constituted a *divan*, in no way there would be a woman there. Definitely men would be the president and the vice presidents of the *divan*. *They would always behave as if there were only men in the meetings*. For example when an activity was carried out, they behaved as if there was no woman. *I mean this was not about the fact that our number was small; rather it was the mentality that was brought about by the patriarchal ideology. Perhaps some were not even aware of this but we were, and we thought that we should separate ourselves from them* (italics added).

In addition to approaching Kurdish women as if they were men or as if they were non-existent at all, in the Kurdish nationalist organizations one can see that Kurdish women were asked to be stripped of their gender. The following is what Esma, one of the women in the "Kurdish feminist" category, says:

> Let me put it that way: *it was necessary for me to be sexless or it was necessary for me not to express the problems that I lived as a woman*. *And whenever I expressed, like someone who talks unnecessarily, I was not to be seen, not to be heard and not be attached any importance*. When I talked about

[25] For a striking example of the prevailing approaches of the men in these Kurdish political organizations *see* Zelal (1996).

> the subjects to which they attributed importance, it was, however, taken to be important, or I was given importance when I did what they said (italics added).

As it can be seen, all of the Kurdish women in this study criticise Kurdish nationalist organizations and their approach to the women. However, the difference among them is the level of the harshness of their criticism. In other words, while the "non-feminist" women bring a criticism 'from within', it is taken one step further in the "feminist nationalist" discourse. The criticism becomes much harsher in the "Kurdish feminist" and "feminist" discourses.

3.2.3 The Specificity/Difference of Kurdish Women's Experiences

It seems that what all Kurdish women respondents point out in terms of the difference of Kurdish womanhood experience from the Turkish one is that this specificity and difference is determined to a large extent by being a Kurd. The following is what Esma says:

> For example, let us say, although the Kurdish woman speaks to her child in Kurdish, she cannot take education in Kurdish or outside the home; she cannot freely speak in her own language. For the Turkish woman this is not the case. Or since she thinks: "I am a Kurd, I will be looked down on", she suppresses her feelings/emotions when she is outside. This is a horrible situation. *Or let us say, she cannot freely give a name to her child from among the names of her own culture. This is not an experience that the Turkish woman lives. What I mean is that the Kurdish woman more intensively lives the difficulties of not being able to express her own national identity, her culture. And this is her difference* (italics added).

All of the respondents indicated that Kurdish women are different from their Turkish counterparts in that they have a different ethnic/national background that gives birth to a quite different set of womanhood experiences. That is to say, their oppression and subordination is doubled due to their difference in terms of their ethnicity. Here are Zeynep's words:

> The residual (*artık*) of the Kurdish women from the Turkish women is that they face more pressure due to national reasons. *I mean, we belong to the same sex and hence we have similarities with Turkish women. However, we are also nationally facing pressure: this is one important difference of ours. Let me put it this way: this is plus a disadvantage for us... Kurdish women also experience all of the negativities that Turkish women live, plus we live another negativity because of our national identity* (italics added).

Put differently, despite their similarity in terms of their gender, Kurdish women are the manifestation/embodiment of difference in a variety of ways, as the other "non-feminist" woman, Ayşe states:

> *The most important common feature of our resemblance is our womanhood. However, the difference is the ethnic difference. Our language is different. Our culture is different. We are dressed differently. We have different lifestyles* (italics added).

The continuous emphasis is placed upon the point that Kurdishness is a very determining factor in the shaping of Kurdish women's experiences, as one listens to the words of one "Kurdish feminist" respondent, namely, Semra:

> *I started school when I was 5 and I started without knowing one single Turkish word. Therefore, I started very much behind the point where a Turkish child starts*. Now, I had to learn and get education in a language that does not belong to me… Of course these are the things that restrict our freedom of expression and the right to expression. Apart from this, there are some results of belonging to a nation, which lacks power, which is a minority and which cannot benefit from the resources of power. You experience these, too. *When all these come together, there emerge other demands of yours. When you express these demands of yours, they do not overlap with the women of the other nation.*

> *Thus, these demands of yours do not find acceptance or they might remain as secondary. However, these are the things that determine your daily life* (italics added).

The predominant tendency among the Kurdish women respondents of this research is not to prioritize the solution of the Kurdish question over that of Kurdish women's oppression and subordination. On the contrary, they differentiate between the two and restrict themselves, however, with the claim that the solution of the Kurdish question is an important step towards overcoming the specific oppression and subordination of Kurdish women. The following is what Zeynep, one of the "non-feminist" women thinks:

> The solution to the woman question can never be achieved with the dissolution of the class society or with the solution of the national question. *I mean nationally you might solve your question, you might bring up the working class to a certain point but the womanhood consciousness is something else*. In my opinion solving the problems of a nation does not solve the woman question. If that was the case, today there would not exist any of the women's movements (italics added).

Similarly, one of the women in the "Kurdish feminist" category, Semra points out to the need of simultaneous struggle so as to overcome Kurdish women's oppression and subordination:

> I do not believe in the stories which tell us that the woman question will be solved in a classless society; there is not such a thing. This, *I mean the woman question is a multi-dimensional struggle that should be put in practice in a coordinated way and that should be maintained daily* (italics added).

However, they all are not of this viewpoint. For instance, one of the "feminist nationalist" women, Hatice attributes the priority to the solution of the Kurdish question in the search of a solution for Kurdish women's oppression and subordination, to the solution of the Kurdish question:

> *I give priority to nationality…I mean if we solve in terms of the national dimension, most of the things, it seems to me, will be solved automatically.* Now look, there are things that we live in terms of class, nation and gender. Now what we live in terms of class and gender is what all the women commonly live. Plus the national thing is different in our case from other women in Turkey. Now if we go to a solution in the national sense, be sure that we will be able to take more steps in the other problems. Now, that triple oppression will at once decrease to two. I mean, we, all the women in Turkey, live everything identically. I mean now this might be strange to you. Perhaps most of the Kurdish feminists will react to this, I am sure they will. When I said this was my opinion, I especially emphasized it. *I mean when you look as a feminist, naturally class and gender gain priority but at the moment, not as a feminist, but rather as a Kurd, I am thinking that it should be the other way round* (italics added).

One interesting point here is as follows. Among the respondents it was the ones in the "Kurdish feminist" and "feminist" categories, who voiced their distrust in the Kurdish nationalist movement in terms of the possibility that Kurdish women might be made to return to the kitchen after the 'national struggle', by referring to the examples that were lived before in the other nationalist movements in the world. Thus when the above respondent stresses that Kurdish feminists might react to her viewpoint, indeed she points out to a ground of tension between Kurdish women's approach to the question of the priority of Kurdish women's activism. Another point that is rather difficult is how she can determine when to speak as a feminist and when as a Kurd. This is the interwoven complexity of Kurdishness and womanhood that needs to be analyzed carefully. A hint is provided, however, in the rest of Hatice's answer:

> *In my opinion, that I am a feminist should not kill my reality.* I have got a reality, and if I say "I am a feminist, thus violence in terms of gender or class comes first" and put both at the forefront, then I would be unfaithful to myself. When I say "in my opinion", I say that it is my own opinion as an individual. *Now look, we have got a political culture that comes from the past, I am not saying this under its influence. What I lived brought me to this day. Now look, I have not been oppressed very much as a woman. I mean have not been*

> *oppressed, nor have I faced violence as mush as an ordinary Kurdish woman* (italics added).

The point that she insistently underlines is that her experience of oppression has been predominantly determined and shaped by being a Kurd, but not by being a woman and a Kurdish woman. Such a point provides one with the significant tool, namely, the experience that each woman has had, so that it would be possible to reach a precise picture of Kurdish women's experience in relation to feminism. In other words, their relationship with feminism is determined on the basis of their specifically varied and diverse set of experiences. Put bluntly, it is possible to claim that, according to their perception of the oppression and subordination that they have had, their positioning in regards to feminism is determined to some extent.

Another "feminist nationalist" respondent, Zehra clarifies this point by confessing the fact that they emphasize their Kurdishness over their womanhood:

> *Our discourse has been this until now. I mean to be able to maintain both side by side but it does not turn to be very realistic, I mean in the event you can bring your Kurdishness in the foreground.* I mean women more brought their Kurdishness in the foreground (italics added).

As it can be seen, although there is not an outward prioritization of Kurdishness over womanhood, factually speaking this is what ultimately turns out to be. That is to say, in the "feminist nationalist" case, we see that they submerge their feminism into their nationalism.

Another important point regarding the specificity of the experience of Kurdish women is about the issue of ÇATOM's and their role, meaning and significance in the lives of Kurdish women. First of all, let us look at how ÇATOM's

are introduced by the official sources. ÇATOM stands for *Çok Amaçlı Toplum Merkezleri* (Multi-Purpose Community Centers). The official information on ÇATOM is as follows:

> In order to improve the situation of women in the region, the GAP Administration, Sanliurfa Governorship and UNICEF jointly launched two multi-purpose community centers in the province of Sanliurfa towards the end of 1995. One of these ÇATOMs was in an urban poor neighborhood in the central province and the other one was in a village. The project was later expanded to other provinces in the region in cooperation with relevant Governorships and the Development Foundation of Turkey (TKV). As of the end of May 2003, there were 27 ÇATOMs in 9 provinces of the region.
>
> ÇATOMs are community based centers established either in urban poor neighborhoods inhabited by rural migrants or in some centrally located villages. Targeting young girls and women over age 14, the ÇATOM aims at building awareness among women about their problems, creating opportunities for the solution of these problems, ensuring their participation to the public sphere, promoting gender balanced development by empowering women and developing replicable models relevant to local context. ÇATOM programs and activities center around five basic areas including education and training, health, income generation, social support and cultural-social activities (http://www.gap.gov.tr/English/Frames/fr21.html).

Except for only one who said that she was not knowledgeable about ÇATOM's, all of the Kurdish women, who participated in the research, state that ÇATOM's are the means through which the State puts its assimilationist policies on Kurdish women, despite the fact that it contributes to the socialization of Kurdish women, making it possible for them to get out of the house. As this socialization is realized only through the denial and rejection of Kurdish women's ethnic identity, all of the respondents vehemently oppose ÇATOM's. For example one of the respondents, Esma states that:

> As far as I know, to me, *being supported by the state, it is in fact a means of the state's assimilation policy, which is especially oriented towards women in the Kurdish cities*. I mean to deny the Kurdish identity under the guise of

> getting women out of the private sphere and of calling them into being in the public sphere. I see it as an institution serving the goal of the official ideology (italics added).

Filiz, the woman in the "feminist" category views ÇATOM's negatively, although, she goes on, she is quite open to such projects:

> The State established ÇATOM. It might be in the year of 94 or so. I cannot remember the exact date. This is the project of Multi-purpose Community Centers… It was the common project of a ministry and GAP Administration Chairship. They established in the regions where the war was lived very intensely, in the Kurdish cities. *Of course the aim was to oriented towards assimilation*. I do not like ÇATOM's. I mean I am generally open to such things, such activities. *I think that the state should do such things, but not like ÇATOM. I mean if it does in the way that denies the belonging, identity and language of Kurdish women, I oppose*. Thus, it has been some thing that I have opposed and I am still opposing. Once they did things concerning health: under the guise of health, sterilization policies were conducted. Reading and writing courses were organized, Kemalism was pumped (italics added).

In brief, they all acknowledge Kurdish women's greater disadvantages, both due to their position in Kurdish culture and due to their oppression by the Turkish state, yet they all emphasize the latter. This is probably so because of their experiences in which they faced state oppression more than the constraints of their traditional culture. And in this context, they are sensitive about ÇATOM's as formal institutions directed to women in the Southeastern region of Turkey, where the Kurdish population concentrates.

CONCLUSION

Taking the question of difference among women as its point of departure, continuing with an elaboration on Black Women's experience of multiple oppression and subordination especially in regards to the parallelism with that of Kurdish women, and continuing with a critical overview of ethnicity-blind feminism in Turkey and of male-dominated and gender-blind Kurdish nationalism, particularly culminating in the relationship with feminism of Kurdish women who have been politically active as 'Kurdish women' in the 1990s' Turkey, this thesis has been an attempt based on a critical approach to feminism in Turkey. In this sense it has attempted to diversify feminism in Turkey by ethnicizing it with a specific reference to Kurdish women's relationship with it.

In several respects this thesis means a genuinely original contribution to the present literature. First of all, it draws attention to the specificity/difference of a notable set of experiences embodied in Kurdish women. In this context, it underlines the fact that Kurdish women, unlike their Turkish counterparts, are oppressed and subordinated doubly since they are both Kurdish and women. In other words, they are illustrative of the manifestation of a double-faced oppression since they are not only Kurds but also women and vice versa.

Based on this first point, secondly this thesis makes an invitation for the need of diversifying feminism in Turkey along ethnic lines on the one hand, and that engendering the Kurdish question on the other. Thirdly, as of reading Kurdish women's political activism[26] as 'Kurdish women' in Turkey in the 1990s, this thesis suggested that it might be seen as the outcome/consequence of the configuration of

[26] I am thankful to Zelal for her drawing my attention to the important distinction between 'activism' and 'movement'.

two social and political forces[27], namely, Kurdish nationalism and 'Turkish' feminism. In other words, it displays that although Kurdish women are highly critical of Kurdish nationalism and feminism in Turkey, they still lean upon the achievements of both forces. Kurdish nationalism contributed to the emergence and development of Kurdish womanhood as well as feminist consciousness by politicizing their woman members and by its modernizing attempts. However, due to its prevailing patriarchy Kurdish nationalism also led Kurdish women to question the nationalist movement. This was depicted in this thesis as the unintended consequence of Kurdish nationalism. Similarly, the feminist movement also played a significant impact on the emergence and development of a feminist consciousness in Kurdish women. Kurdish women benefited from the feminist movement in Turkey in terms of its theoretical accumulations and its gaining prevalence in contemporary Turkey.

Another point that this thesis suggests is that Black feminist thought and activism has an important place in an understanding and analyzing Kurdish women's oppression and subordination in addition to their activism, despite the fact that there is a difference between their specific social and historical context in general and the difference between the form of their oppression and subordination in particular. That is to say, while there are four faces of oppression in the context of Black women, namely, gender, race, class and sexuality, it is a two-fold one in the context of Kurdish women: ethnicity and gender. Undoubtedly, such a limitation with the two faces of oppression of Kurdish women does not necessarily mean that they are oppressed and subordinated solely in terms of ethnicity and gender. The focus on these two emanates from the fact that their predominant oppression is due to their ethnicity and gender. In this context, their oppression in terms of their class position

[27] Sirman (1989) has been the source of inspiration for me to reach this analysis.

remains to be elaborated. One other reason for not analyzing the class dimension of their oppression and subordination is due to the fact that it would require a much more comprehensive conceptual theoretical as well as empirical scope, which would be difficult to satisfactorily fulfill in a Master's thesis. Yet without the class dimension of their oppression and subordination, still it seems possible to argue that Kurdish women have the epistemic advantage of having been doubly oppressed and subordinated and thus, they might be argued to have a potential for reorienting/reformulating the policies concerning the feminist movement and the Kurdish question.

One important remark that should be made is the following. Although this thesis centers on Kurdish women and their experience of oppression and subordination, it should be noted that they in no way present a homogeneous and/or unified set of experiences. On the contrary, they are further divided among themselves along religious/sectarian, linguistic, regional, social class and educational lines. Yet this thesis has specifically concerned itself with their differentiation in political ideological terms with a particular attention on their relationship with the feminist movement in Turkey.

Finally it should be added that it is no speculation to argue that the lives of Kurdish women will undergo further diversification and differentiation with the two recent developments. The first is the US-Iraqi war. The social and political changes that will be realized will definitely have their impacts on the lives of the Kurds, including Kurdish women, which will consequently have its reflections on the social and political agenda pertaining to the Kurdish question and the Kurdish womanhood experience in Turkey. The second development is the further steps that have been taken recently, regarding Turkey's integration with the EU. This is a process, which

seems to contribute a lot to the democratic solution of the Kurdish question, which will in turn affect Kurdish women's life conditions.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abadan-Unat, N. 1998. "Söylemden Protestoya: Türkiye'de Kadın Hareketlerinin Dönüşümü" *in* A. B. Hacımirzaoğlu (ed.) *75 Yılda Kadınlar ve Erkekler*, İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, pp. 323-336.

----- 1981. "Social Change and Turkish Women" *in* N. Abadan-Unat (ed.) *Women in Turkish Society*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, pp. 5-31.

Acker, J. 1999. "Rewriting Class, Race and Gender: Problems in Feminist Rethinking" *in* M. M. Ferree et al. (eds.) *Revisioning Gender*, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, pp. 44-69.

Açık, N. 2002. "Ulusal Mücadele, Kadın Mitosu ve Kadınların Harekete Geçirilmesi: Türkiye'deki Çağdaş Kürt Kadın Dergilerinin Bir Analizi" *in* A. Bora and A. Günal (ed.) *90'larda Türkiye'de Feminizm*, İstanbul: İletişim, pp. 279-306.

Akkoç, N. 2002. "Diyarbakır Ka-Mer'in Kuruluş Hikâyesi ve Yürüttüğü Çalışmalar" *in* A. Bora and A. Günal (eds.) *90'larda Türkiye'de Feminizm*, İstanbul: İletişim, pp. 205-216.

Alakom, R. 1998. "Araştırmalarda Fazla Adı Geçmeyen Bir Kuruluş: Kürt Kadınları Teali Cemiyeti" *Tarih ve Toplum*, no. 171, pp.36-40.

----- 2001. "Kurdish Women in Constantinople at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century" (trans. by M. L. Chyet), *in* S. Mojab (ed.) *Women of A Non-State Nation: The Kurds*, California: Mazda Publishers, pp. 53-70.

Altınay, A. G. 2000. "Giriş: Milliyetçilik, Toplumsal Cinsiyet ve Feminizm" *in* A. G. Altınay (ed.) *Vatan, Millet, Kadınlar*, İstanbul: İletişim, pp. 11-28.

Amos, V. and Parmar, P. 2001. "Challenging Imperial Feminism" *in* Kum-Kum Bhavnani (ed.) *Feminism and 'Race'*, New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 17-32.

Anderson, B. 1983. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, NY: Verso.

Arat, Y. 1992. "1980'ler Türkiye'sinde Kadın Hareketi: Liberal Kemalizm'in Radikal Uzantısı" *in* N. Arat (ed.) *Her Yönüyle Türkiye'de Kadın Olgusu*, İstanbul: Say, pp. 75-95.

----- 1997. "The Project of Modernity and Women in Turkey" *in* S. Bozdoğan and R. Kasaba (ed.) *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*, Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, pp. 95-112.

Aşa, E. 1992. "1869-1923 Yılları Arasında Yayınlanan Türk Kadın ve Aile Dergileri" *Sosyo-Kültürel Değişme Sürecinde Türk Ailesi*, T.C. Başbakanlık Aile Araştırma Kurumu, cilt: 3, Ankara.

Barkey, H. J. and Fuller, G. E. 1997. "Turkey's Kurdish Question: Critical Turning Points and Missed Opportunities" *The Middle East Journal*, vol. 51, no. 1, pp. 59-79.

Baykan A. and Ötüş-Baskett, B. 1999. *Nezihe Muhittin ve **Türk Kadını** (1931): Türk Feminizminin Düşünsel Kökenleri ve Feminist Tarih Yazıcılığından Bir Örnek*, İstanbul: İletişim.

Bekiroğlu, N. 1998. *Şâir Nigâr Hanım*, İstanbul: İletişim.

Berktay, F. 1996. "Türkiye'de 'Kadınlık Konumu'" *Yüzyıl Biterken Cunhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 13, İstanbul: İletişim, pp. 757-764.

----- 2001. "Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet'e Feminizm" *in* Mehmet Ö. Alkan (ed.) *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: Cumhuriyet'e Devreden Düşünce Mirası, Tanzimat ve Meşrutiyet'in Birikimi*, İstanbul: İletişim, pp. 348-361.

Bora, A. 1996. "Kadın Hareketi: Nereden Nereye" *Birikim*, no. 83, pp. 39-41.

----- 2003. Email to the author, September 2.

Bora, A. and Günal, A. 2002. "Önsöz" *in* A. Bora and A. Günal (eds.) *90'larda Türkiye'de Feminizm*, İstanbul: İletişim, pp. 7-11.

Bozarslan, H. 2002. "Kürd Milliyetçiliği ve Kürd Hareketi (1898-2000)" *in* T. Bora and M. Gültekingil (eds.) *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: Milliyetçilik*, cilt. 4, İstanbul: İletişim, pp. 841-870.

Brah, A. 1997. *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*, London and New York: Routledge.

Brown, E. B. 1995. "What Has Happened Here: The Politics of Difference in Women's History and Feminist Politics" *in* D. C. Hine et al. (ed.) *We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible: A Reader in Black Women's History*, Brooklyn and New York: Carlson Publishing Inc., pp. 39-54.

Burçak, B. 1998. "II. Abdülhamid Devrinde İslam ve Batılılaşma Karşısında Kadının Konumu" *Doğu Batı*, no. 3, pp. 109-117.

Canan. 1998. "Gözüm Aynı Göz, Sözüm Aynı Söz, Tenim Farklı!" *Jujîn: 2 Aylık Kürt Kadın Dergisi*, no. 7, pp. 30-32.

Carby, H. V. 1997. "White Woman Listen! Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood" *in* H. S. Mirza (ed.) *Black British Feminism: A Reader*, London and New York: Routledge, pp. 45-53.

Cavarero, A. 1992. "Equality and Sexual Difference: Amnesia in Political Thought" *in* G. Bock and S. James (eds.) *Beyond Equality and Difference: Citizenship, Feminist Politics and Female Subjectivity*, London: Routledge, pp. 32-47.

Chaliand, G. 1994. *The Kurdish Tragedy*, London: Zed Books.

Collins, P. H. 1998. *Fighting Words: Black Women and the Search for Justice*, Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 44-76.

Collins, P. H. 2000. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment*, New York and London: Routledge, pp. 1-43.

Collins, P. H. 2001. "The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought" *in* Kum-Kum Bhavnani (ed.) *Feminism and 'Race'*, New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 184-202.

Cornell, S. and Hartmann, D. 1998. *Ethnicity and Race: Making Identities in a Changing World*, London: Pine Forge Press.

Cornell, S. E. 2001. "The Kurdish Question in Turkish Politics" *Orbis*, vol. 45, issue: 1, pp. 1-10.

Corrin, C. 1999. *Feminist Perspectives on Politics*, London: Longman.

Çakır, S. et al. 1993. *İstanbul Kütüphanelerindeki Eski Harfli Türkçe Kadın Dergileri Bibliyografyası*, Kadın Eserleri Kütüphanesi ve Bilgi Merkezi Vakfı Yayınları: 5, İstanbul: Metis Yayınları.

Çakır, S. 1996a. *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi*, İstanbul: Metis.

----- 1996b. "Türkiye'de Feminizmin Dünü ve Bugünü" *Yüzyıl Biterken Cunhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 13, İstanbul: İletişim, pp. 750-756.

Demirdirek, A. 1993. *Osmanlı Kadınlarının Hayat Hakkı Arayışının Bir Hikayesi*, Ankara: İmge.

----- 1998. "In Pursuit of the Ottoman Women's Movement" (trans. by Z. F. Arat) *in* Z. F. Arat (ed.) *Deconstructing Images of "The Turkish Woman"*, New York: St. Martin's Press, pp. 65-82.

Durakbaşa, A. 1998. "Kemalism as Identity Politics in Turkey" *in* Z. F. Arat (ed.) *Deconstructing Images of "The Turkish Woman"*, New York: St. Martin's Press, pp. 139-155.

----- 2002. *Halide Edib: Türk Modernleşmesi ve Feminizm*, İstanbul: İletişim.

Entessar, N. 1992. *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, Boulder: Lynn Rienner Publishers.

Eraslan, S. 2002. "Uğultular...Silüetler..." *in* A. Bora and A. Günal (eds.) *90'larda Türkiye'de Feminizm*, İstanbul: İletişim, pp. 239-277.

Eriksen, T. H. 1997. "Ethnicity, Race and Nation" *in* M. Guibernau and J. Rex (eds.) *The Ethnicity Reader: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Migration*, Cambridge: Polity Press, pp. 33-42.

Ertürk, Y. 1995. "Rural Women and Modernization in Southeastern Anatolia" *in* Ş. Tekeli (ed.) *Women in Modern Turkish Society: A Reader*, London and New Jersey: Zed Books, pp. 141-152.

Evans, M. 1983. "In Praise of Theory: The Case for Women's Studies" *in* G. Bowless and R. D. Klein (eds.) *Theories of Women's Studies*, London: Routledge, pp. 219-228.

Farganis, S. 1994. *Situating Feminism: From Thought to Action*, London: Sage Publications.

Gellner, E. 1983. *Nations and Nationalism*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

----- 1997. "Nationalism as a Product of Industrial Society" *in* M. Guibernau and J. Rex (eds.) *The Ethnicity Reader: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Migration*, Cambridge: Polity Press, pp. 52-69.

Gordon, V. 1987. *Black Women, Feminism and Black Liberation: Which Way*?, Chicago: Third World Press.

Gross, E. 1986. "What is Feminist Theory?" *in* C. Pateman and E. Gross (eds.) *Feminist Challenges: Social and Political Theory*, London: Allen and Unwin, pp. 190-204.

Gunter, M. M. 2000. "The Continuing Kurdish Problem in Turkey After Öcalan's Capture" *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 21, issue: 5, pp. 1-17.

Günal, A. 2001. "Mine G. Kırıkkanat ve Beyaz Türk Oryantalizmi" *Birikim*, no.144, pp. 66-73.

Günçıkan, B. 1996. *Cumartesi Anneleri*, İstanbul: İletişim.

Güneş-Ayata, A. 1997. "Kentsel Türkiye'de Toplumsal Cinsiyet ve Etnik Kimlik" *in* N. Bilgin (ed.) *Cumhuriyet, Demokrasi ve Kimlik*, İstanbul: Bağlam, pp. 197-205.

----- 1998. "Etnik Kimlik ve Toplumsal Cinsiyet: Ankara'da Çerkes Kadınlar" in O. Çitci (ed.) *20. Yüzyılın Sonunda Kadınlar ve Gelecek*, Ankara: TODAİE, pp. 71-80.

Güzel, Ş. 1985. "Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e Toplumsal Değişim ve Kadın" *Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 3-4, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, pp. 858-874.

Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete. August 19, 1311. "Tahdis-i Nimet, Tayin-i Meslek" *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete*, no: 1, pp. 2-3.

Hartsock, N. 1983. "The Feminist Standpoint: Developing the Ground for a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism" *in* S. Harding and M. B. Hintikka (eds.) *Discovering Reality: Feminist Perspectives on Epistemology, Metaphysics, Methodology and Philosophy of Science*, Dodrecht: D. Reidel Pub., pp. 283-310.

Hassanpour, A. 2003. Email to the author, July 27.

Hobsbawm, E. J. 1983. "Introduction: Inventing Traditions" *in* E. J. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds.) *The Invention of Tradition*, NY: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-14.

----- 1996. "Ethnicity and Nationalism in Europe Today" *in* G. Balakrsihnan (ed.) *Mapping the Nation*, London and New York: Verso, pp. 255-266.

Hooks, B. 1992. *Ain't I A Woman: Black Women and Feminism*, Boston/MA: South End Press.

----- 2000. "Black Women: Shaping Feminist Theory" *in* J. James and T. D. Sharpley-Whiting (eds.) *The Black Feminist Reader*, UK: Blackwell, pp. 131-145.

Houston, C. 2001. "Profane Institutions: Kurdish Diaspora in the Turkish City" *Australian Journal of Anthropology*, vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 1-14.

Işık, N. 2003. Email to the author, August 15 and September 8.

İçduygu, A. et al. 1999. "The Ethnic Question in an Environment of Insecurity: the Kurds in Turkey" *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 22, no. 6, pp. 991-1010.

İlkkaracan, P. 1998. "Doğu Anadolu'da Kadın ve Aile" *in* A. B. Hacımirzaoğlu (ed.) *75 Yılda Kadınlar ve Erkekler*, İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, pp. 173-192.

İlkkaracan, P. and İlkkaracan, İ. 1998. "Kuldan Yurttaşa: Kadınlar Neresinde?" *in* A. Ünsal (ed.) *75 Yılda Tebaa'dan Yurttaşa Doğru*, İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, pp. 77-90.

Jayawardena, K. 1986. *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World*, London: Zed Books.

Jwaideh, W. 1999. *Kürt Milliyetçiliğinin Tarihi*, İstanbul: İletişim.

Kadınlar Dünyası, "10 Temmuz İd-i Ekber-i Hürriyettir" *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 10 Temmuz 1329, no: 98, p. 1.

Kadınlar Dünyası. March 1, 1914. "Kadın ve Hakk-ı İntihab" *Kadınlar Dünyası*, no: 133, p. 2.

Kadınlar Dünyası. 5 Teşrin-i Evvel 1329. "Osmanlı Kadınlığının İstediği" *Kadınlar Dünyası*, no: 112, p. 2.

Kadıoğlu, A. 1998. "Cinselliğin İnkarı: Büyük Toplumsal Projelerin Nesnesi Olarak Türk Kadınları" *in* A. B. Hacımirzaoğlu (ed.) *75 Yılda Kadınlar ve Erkekler,* İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, pp. 89-100.

Kandiyoti, D. 1997. *Cariyeler, Bacılar, Yurttaşlar*, İstanbul: Metis.

Kaplan, L. 1999. "II. Meşrutiyet Dönemi Osmanlı Kadınlarının Özgürleşme Hareketi" *in* G. Eren (ed.) *Osmanlı*, cilt: 5, Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, pp. 466-473.

Kayhan, F. 2000. "Nasıl ve Kime Göre Kürt Kadın İmajı" *Roza: Cinsiyetçiliğe ve Irkçılığa Karşı İki Aylık Kürt Kadın Dergisi*, no.17, pp. 45-51.

Kılıç, Z. 1998. "Cumhuriyet Türkiye'sinde Kadın Hareketine Genel Bir Bakış" *in* A. B. Hacımirzaoğlu (ed.) *75 Yılda Kadınlar ve Erkekler*, İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, pp. 347-360.

King, D. K. 1997. "Multiple Jeopardy, Multiple Consciousness: The Context of a Black Feminist Ideology" *in* D. T. Meyers (ed.) *Feminist Social Thought: A Reader*, New York and London: Routledge, pp. 220-242.

Laçiner, Ö. 1997. "Devlet-Toplum İlişkisi" *Birikim*, no. 93-94, pp. 18-25.

Mango, A. 1994. "Turks and Kurds" *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 30, no. 4, pp. 975-997.

McClintock, A. 1993. "Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family" *Feminist Review*, no. 44, pp. 61-80.

McDowall, D. 1994. "Kürt Sorunu: Tarihsel Bir Bakış" *in* P. G. Kreyenbroek and S. Sperl (ed.) *Kürtler (Güncel Bir Araştırma)*, İstanbul: Cep Kitapları, pp.14-37.

Mies, M. and Shiva, V. 1993. *Ecofeminism*, London and New Jersey: Zed Books.

Mill, J. S. 2000. *Özgürlük Üstüne*, İstanbul: Belge Yayınları.

Mojab, S. 2001. "Introduction: The Solitude of the Stateless: Kurdish Women at the Margins of Feminist Knowledge" *in* S. Mojab (ed.) *Women of A Non-State Nation: The Kurds*, California: Mazda Publishers, pp. 1-24.

Mojab, S. (ed.) 2001. *Women of A Non-State Nation: The Kurds*, California: Mazda Publishers.

Olson, R. W. 1989. *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion*, Austin: University of Texas Press.

Phillips, A. 2001. "From Inequality to Difference: A Severe Case of Displacement" *in* M. Evans (ed.) *Feminism: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, vol. 4/Feminism and the Politics of Difference, London and New York: Routledge, pp. 441-453.

Pusch, B. 2001. "Kamusallığa Doğru: Türkiye'de İslâmcı ve Sünni-Muhafazakâr Kadın Sivil Toplum Kuruluşlarının Yükselişi" Fransız Anadolu Araştırmaları Enstitüsü&Orient-Institut, *Türkiye'de Sivil Toplum ve Milliyetçilik*, İstanbul: İletişim, pp. 461-487.

Racioppi, L. And See, K. O'Sullivan 2000. "Engendering Nation and National Identity" *in* S. Ranchod-Nilsson and M. A. Tétreault (eds.) *Women, States and Nationalism: At Home in the Nation?*, London and New York: Routledge, pp. 18-34.

Ramazanoğlu, C. 1989. *Feminism and the Contradictions of Oppression*, London: Routledge.

Ranchod-Nilsson, S. and Tétreault, M. A. 2000. "Gender and Nationalism: Moving Beyond Fragmented Conversations" *in* S. Ranchod-Nilsson and M. A. Tétreault (eds.) *Women, States and Nationalism: At Home in the Nation?*, London and New York: Routledge, pp. 1-17.

Sancar, S. 2001. "Türkler/Kürtler, Anneler ve Siyaset: Savaşta Çocuklarını Kaybetmiş Türk ve Kürt Anneler Üzerine Bir Yorum" *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 90, pp. 22-40.

Saktanber, A. 2001. "Kemalist Kadın Hakları Söylemi" *in* A. İnsel (ed.) *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: Kemalizm*, İstanbul: İletişim, pp. 323-333.

Sirman, N. 1989. "Feminism in Turkey: A Short History" *New Perspectives on Turkey*, Fall 1989, 3(1), pp. 1-34.

----- 2003. "Kadın'dan Toplumsal Cinsiyet'e" Speech delivered at the 10th anniversary of the establishment of Research and Implementation Center on the Problems of Women at University of Ankara, Ankara, January 23.

Spelman, E. V. 2001. "Gender and Race: The Ampersand Problem in Feminist Thought" *in* Kum-Kum Bhavnani (ed.) *Feminism and 'Race'*, New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 74-88.

Stacey, J. and Thorne, B. 1998. "The Missing Feminist Revolution in Sociology" *in* K. Myers et al. (eds.) *Feminist Foundations: Towards Transforming Sociology*, London: Sage Publications, pp. 219-239.

Stanley, L. and Wise, S. 1990. "Method, Methodology and Epistemology in Feminist Research Processes" *in* L. Stanley (ed.) *Feminist Praxis: Research, Theory and Epistemology in Feminist Sociology*, London: Routledge, pp. 20-60.

Tanrıkulu, S. 1997. "Dilimi Bilsen Beni Anlayabilir misin?" *Jujîn: 2 Aylık Kürt Kadın Dergisi*, no. 3-4, p. 27.

Taylor, U. 1998. "The Historical Evolution of Black Feminist Theory and Praxis" *Journal of Black Studies*, vol. 29, no. 2.

Tekeli, Ş. 1981. "Women in Turkish Politics" *in* N. Abadan-Unat (ed.) *Women in Turkish Society*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, pp.293-310.

----- 1985. "Kadın" *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, cilt: 5, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, pp. 1190-1204.

----- 1986. “Emergence of the Feminist Movement in Turkey” *in* D. Dahlerup (ed.) *The New Women’s Movement*, London: Sage, pp. 179-199.

----- 1989. “80’lerde Türkiye’de Kadınların Kurtuluşu Hareketinin Gelişmesi” *Birikim*, no: 3, pp. 34-41.

----- 1995a. “1980’ler Türkiye’sinde Kadınlar” *in* Ş. Tekeli (ed.) *1980’ler Türkiye’sinde Kadın Bakış Açısından Kadınlar*, İstanbul: İletişim, pp. 15-50.

----- 1995b. “Women in Turkey in the 1980s” *in* Ş. Tekeli (ed.) *Women in Modern Turkish Society: A Reader*, London: Zed Books, pp. 1-21.

----- 1998. “Birinci ve İkinci Dalga Feminist Hareketlerin Karşılaştırmalı İncelemesi Üzerine Bir Deneme” *in* A. B. Hacımirzaoğlu (ed.) *75 Yılda Kadınlar ve Erkekler*, İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, pp. 337-346.

Thomas, M. 2003. “Tony Blair sees himself as a leader of steely resolution, but he was so rattled by the anti-war march that he looked like a man about to start on Prozac, move to Dorset and teach pilates” *New Statesman*, vol. 132, issue: 4626, pp. 1-2, February 24.

Tong, R. 1992. *Feminist Thought: A Comprehensive Introduction*, London: Routledge.

Toprak, Z. 1988. “Halk Fırkası’ndan Önce Kurulan Parti: Kadınlar Halk Fırkası” *Tarih ve Toplum*, cilt. 9, no. 51, pp. 30-31.

Tuksal, H. Ş. 2000. “Kadın Bakış Açısına Sahip Olmalıyız” *Birikim*, no.137, pp. 48-59.

----- 2001. “Sünni-Muhafazakâr Çevrelerde Kadın Politikası Üretmenin Güçlükleri” Fransız Anadolu Araştırmaları Enstitüsü&Orient-Institut, *Türkiye’de Sivil Toplum ve Milliyetçilik*, İstanbul: İletişim, pp. 488-503.

Van Bruinessen, M. 1998. “Shifting National and Ethnic Identities: The Kurds in Turkey and the European Diaspora” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, vol. 18, issue: 1, pp. 1-11.

Warren, K. J. (ed.) 1997. *Ecofeminism- Women, Culture, Nature*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Weedon, C. 1999. *Feminism, Theory and the Politics of Difference*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

West, L. A. 1997. *Feminist Nationalism*, New York and London: Routledge.

Whelehan, I. 1995. *Modern Feminist Thought: From the Second Wave to ‘Post-Feminism’*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Wilford, R. 1998. “Women, Ethnicity and Nationalism: Surveying the Ground” *in* R. Wilford and R. L. Miller (eds.) *Women, Ethnicity and Nationalism*, London: Routledge, pp. 1-22.

http://www.gap.gov.tr/English/Frames/fr21.html

Y. Naciye. April 10, 1329. “Erkekler Hakikaten Hürriyetperver midirler? Kadınlar Ne İstiyorlar?” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, no: 7, p. 3.

Yalçın-Heckmann, L. 1995. “Aşiretli Kadın: Göçer ve Yarı-Göçer Toplumlarda Cinsiyet Rolleri ve Kadın Stratejileri” *in* Ş. Tekeli (ed.) *1980’ler Türkiyesinde Kadın Bakış Açısından Kadınlar*, İstanbul: İletişim, pp. 277-290.

Yalçın-Heckmann, L. and van Gelder, P. 2000. “90’larda Türkiye’de Siyasal Söylemin Dönüşümü Çerçevesinde Kürt Kadınlarının İmajı: Bazı Eleştirel Değerlendirmeler” *in* A. Altınay (ed.) *Vatan, Millet, Kadınlar*, İstanbul: İletişim, pp. 308-338.

Yaraman, A. 2001. *Resmi Tarihten Kadın Tarihine*, İstanbul: Bağlam.

Yavuz, M. H. 1998. “A Preamble to the Kurdish Question: The Politics of Kurdish Identity” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 1-8.

----- 2001. “Five Stages of the Construction of Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey” *Nationalism&Ethnic Politics*, vol. 7, no. 3, London: Frank Cass, pp. 1-24.

Yeğen, M. 1996. “The Turkish State Discourse and the Exclusion of Kurdish Identity”, *in* S. Kedourie (ed.) *Turkey: Identity, Democracy, Politics*, London: Frank Cass, pp. 216-229.

----- 1999. *Devlet Söyleminde Kürt Sorunu*, İstanbul: İletişim.

Yuval-Davis, N. 1997. *Gender and Nation*, London: Sage.

----- 1998. “Gender and Nation” *in* R. Wilford and R. L. Miller (ed.) *Women, Ethnicity and Nationalism*, London: Routledge, pp. 23-35.

Zelal. 1996. “Kürt Erkeklerine ya da Erkek Kürtlere” *Yeni Eksik Etek*, no. 8, pp. 8-9.

APPENDIX A

DERİNLEMESİNE MÜLAKAT SORULARI

Bu mülakatın amacı Bilkent Üniversitesi Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi Bölümünde yüksek lisans eğitimim kapsamında yürüttüğüm tez çalışmamın konusunu oluşturan Kürt kadınlarının 1990'larda Türkiye'deki politik hareketliliğini anlamaya dönüktür. Katıldığınız için size teşekkür ederiz.

Metin Yüksel

1) Bize kendinizden biraz söz eder misiniz?

i- Son bitirdiğiniz okul :

ii- Doğduğunuz yer :

İl : Köy :

iii- Yaşamakta olduğunuz yer :

İl : Semt :

iv- Burada yaşadığınız süre :

v- Mesleğiniz :

vi- Yaşınız :

vii- Etnik kökeniniz :

viii- Medeni durumunuz :

Evli : Bekar : Boşanmış :

Dul :

ix- Çocuk sayısı :

x- Annenizin doğum yeri :

Babanızın doğum yeri :

xi- Annenizin mesleği :

Babanızın mesleği :

xii- Annenizin son bitirdiği okul :

Babanızın son bitirdiği okul :

xiii- Annenizin etnik kökeni :

Babanızın etnik kökeni :

xiv- Annenizin konuştuğu dil veya diller :

Babanızın konuştuğu dil veya diller :

Evli iseniz;

xv- Eşinizin eğitim durumu :

xvi- Eşinizin doğduğu yer :

İl: Köy:

xvii- Eşinizin mesleği :

xviii- Eşinizin konuştuğu dil veya diller :

2) Kendinizi politik olarak nasıl tanımlıyorsunuz? (Probe: Feminist? Kürt hareketi içinde aktif birisi? Kürt kadın hareketinde aktif birisi? Kürt feminist?)

3) Kadın ve/veya Kürt hareketindeki özgeçmişinizi anlatır mısınız? (Az önceki soruya verilen cevaba binaen: Bu hareketteki özgeçmişinizi anlatır mısınız?)

4) Sizce feminizm ne anlama geliyor? Bize feminizm anlayışınızdan bahseder misiniz?

5) Size göre Türkiye'de 1980 sonrası feminist hareketin, '80 öncesi ile karşılaştırıldığında en önemli sayılabilecek özellikleri nelerdir? (a)

6) '80 sonrası feminist hareket 'Türkiye'de kadın' olgusuna nasıl bir yaklaşım içinde olageldi? Bu bağlamda feminist hareketin ne tür katkılarından ve eksikliklerinden söz edilebilir? (b)

Şimdi de 1980'lerle '90'ları karşılaştıralım:

7) Size göre 1980'ler ile 1990'lar arasında feminist harekette bir farklılık var mı, yok mu? Varsa hangi yönleriyle birbirlerinden farklılaşıyorlar?

8) Tüm bu konuşulanlara bakılarak özetlemek gerekirse, sizce günümüzde tek bir feminist hareketten söz edilebilir mi Türkiye'de? Neden?

Biraz da feminizm ve Kürt hareketi ilişkisine bakalım şimdi.

9) Türkiye'de 1980 sonrası feminist hareketin Kürt meselesine bakışı ve yaklaşımı hakkındaki değerlendirmenizi alabilir miyiz?

10) Milliyetçilik size göre ne anlam ifade ediyor?

11) Feminizm milliyetçilik ile zıt düşer mi sizce, yoksa böyle bir şey söz konusu değil midir?

12) Türkiye'de feminist hareketin Kürt kadın deneyimiyle bir ilişkisi oldu mu? Olduysa bu ilişki nasıl bir ilişkiydi? (Probe: Bir başka deyişle Türkiye'deki feminist hareket 'Türk feminist hareketi' midir?)

13) Kürt feminizmi nedir? Nasıl ve ne zaman oluştu? (Probe: 'Türk feminizmi'ne bir tepki mi?)

14) Kürt feminizmindeki 'Kürt' vurgusu onu milliyetçi kılar mı sizce?

15) Kürt feminizmi hangi grup kadınlara/insanlara hitap ediyor? Kimlere açık ve kimleri kapsıyor?

16) Türkiye'deki feminist camia içinde kendinizi nasıl hissediyorsunuz?

17) Feminist camiada nasıl karşılandığınız ve size nasıl yaklaşıldığı hakkında yaşadığınız deneyimleri bizimle paylaşır mısınız? (Probe: 8 Mart'lardan önceki bir araya gelişlerde feministlerce dışlandığınız oldu mu?)

18) Türkiye'deki feminist örgütlerle bir ilişkiniz var mı? Varsa hangileri ile var? Hangi düzeylerde seyreden, nasıl bir diyalog bu?

Biraz da 'Kürt kadınları' kavramını açalım:

19) Kürt kadınları kimlerdir?

20) Kürt kadınları homojen bir grup mudur, yoksa onların da kendi içlerinde farklılıkları var mıdır? Varsa hangi bakımlardan bir farklılaşma bu?

21) Kürt toplumunda kadının konumunu nasıl görüyorsunuz? (Probe: berdel, namus cinayetleri, çok evlilik)

22) Kürt kadınlarının deneyimleri Türkiye'deki diğer kadınların deneyimleri ile ne tür benzerlikler ve farklılıklar barındırıyor içinde?

23) ÇATOM'lar hakkında bilginiz var mı? Ne zaman kuruldu? Kuruluş amacı ne idi? Bize ÇATOM'ların Kürt kadınlarının yaşamlarında tuttuğu yer ve oynadığı rol konusundaki düşüncelerinizi aktarır mısınız?

Şimdi de Kürt kadın grup ve dergilerinden bahsedelim:

24) Kürt kadın gruplarından ve dergilerinden söz eder misiniz bize?

i- Ne zaman, nerede kuruldular ve yayınlanmaya başladılar?

ii- Halen faaller mi? (Değillerse neden değiller?)

iii- Doğu ve Güneydoğu Anadolu bölgelerinde de faaliyetleri oldu mu ve halen de oluyor mu? Olmadıysa neden olmadı?

iv- Sizce bunlara neden gereksinim duyuldu? (Probe: Kürt siyasal oluşumlarında eksik ya da yanlış bir yaklaşım/düzenleme mi vardı?)

25) Siz halen bir kadın grubunda ya da Kürt kadın grubunda yer alıyor musunuz?

i- Evetse, bize grubunuzun amaçlarından söz eder misiniz biraz?

ii- Sizin veya grubunuzun diğer Kürt kadın örgütleriyle ilişkileriniz var mı? Nasıl bir ilişki bu?

Şimdi de Kürt hareketi ve Kürt feminizmi ilişkisine bakalım.

26) Kürt hareketi ile Kürt feminizmi arasında bir ilişkiden söz edilebilir mi?

27) Kürt hareketi ile Kürt feminizmi Kürt sorununda ve kadın konusunda ne tür benzerlikler ve farklılıklar taşıyorlar?

28) Kürt kadın mücadelesinin sizce öncelik vermesi gereken bir konu var mıdır?

29) Genel olarak Kürt sorununun demokratik yollardan çözümü ya da sınıflı toplumun son bulması gibi çözümlerin Kürt kadınlarının ezilmişliğini de sonlandıracağını iddia etmek mümkün mü? Neden?

30) Kürt hareketinde kadın, kadın hareketinde Kürt olmanız dolayısıyla ayrımcılığa uğradığınız oldu mu? Evetse nasıl?

31) Rahat konuşup düşündüğünüz dil hangisi?

i- Kürtçe biliyor musunuz?

ii- Ne zaman öğrendiniz?

iii- Nasıl öğrendiniz?

iv- Ne düzeyde Kürtçe bilginiz?

v- (Eğer Kürtçe ile bir mesafesi varsa) Bu durumu nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz?

vi- (Çocuğu olup da Kürtçe de bilenlere) çocuklarınızla Kürtçe mi konuşuyorsunuz?

vii- Kürt çocuklarının anadillerinde eğitim görmeleri konusunda ne düşünüyorsunuz?

32) Kendinizi Türkiye'nin siyaset sahnesinde nerede görüyorsunuz?

33) Kürt etnik/ulusal kimliği üzerinden siyaset yapan bir siyasi partinin varlığı hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?

34) 2002 milletvekili genel seçimlerinde oy kullandınız mı? Hayırsa neden? Evetse hangi partiye oy verdiniz? Neden?

35) Şimdi seçim olsa hangi partiye oy verirsiniz? Neden?

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONS OF THE IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW

The aim of this interview is oriented to understand the political activism of Kurdish women in Turkey in the 1990s, which constitutes the topic of my thesis in the graduate program of the Department of Political Science and Public and Public Administration at Bilkent University. Thank you for your participation in this study.

Metin Yüksel

1) Could you tell me about yourself?

i- Your education :

ii- Place of birth :

City : Village :

iii- Where you are living at the moment :

City : Neighbourhood :

iv- How long you have been living here :

v- Your job :

vi- Your age :

vii- Your ethnic origin :

viii- Marital status :

Married : Single : Divorced :

Widow :

ix- Number of children :

x- Your mother's place of birth :

Your father's place of birth:

xi- Your mother's job :

Your father's job :

xii- Your mother's education :

Your father's education :

xiii- Your mother's ethnic origin :

Your father's ethnic origin :

xiv- The language(s) which your mother speaks :

The language(s) which your father speaks :

If married;

xv- Your spouse's education :

xvi- Your spouse's place of birth :

City : Village :

xvii- Your spouse's job :

xviii- The language(s) which your spouse speaks :

2) How do you politically define yourself? (Probe: Feminist? An activist in the Kurdish movement? An activist in the Kurdish women's movement? Kurdish feminist?)

3) Could you briefly tell me about your autobiography in the women's and/or Kurdish movement? (Depending on the answer of the previous question: could you tell me about your background in this movement?)

4) According to you what does feminism mean? Could you tell me about your understanding of feminism?

5) According to you what are the most important characteristics of the post-1980 feminist movement in Turkey in comparison with that of the pre-1980? (a)

6) How has the approach of the post-1980 feminist movement towards the phenomenon of 'woman in Turkey' been? In this context what kind of contributions and shortcomings of the feminist movement can one speak of? (b)

Now let us compare the 1980s and 1990s:

7) According to you is there a difference between the feminist movement of the 1980s and 1990s or not? If yes, in what respects?

8) To summarize, regarding what has been said so far, according to you can one speak of a single feminist movement in Turkey today? Why?

Now let us look a little bit at the relationship between feminism and the Kurdish movement.

9) Could I take your evaluation about the approach of the feminist movement in Turkey in the post-1980 towards the Kurdish question?

10) According to you what does nationalism mean?

11) According to you is there an opposition between feminism and nationalism or not?

12) Has there been a relationship of the feminist movement in Turkey with the experience of Kurdish women? If yes, what kind of a relationship was it? (Probe: In other words, is the feminist movement in Turkey a 'Turkish feminist movement'?)

13) What is Kurdish feminism? How and when did it come into existence? (Probe: Is it a reaction to 'Turkish feminism'?)

14) Does the emphasis placed on 'Kurdish' in Kurdish feminism render it nationalist?

15) Which group of women/human beings does Kurdish feminism address? To whom is it open and whom does it include?

16) How do you feel in the feminist community in Turkey?

17) Could you please share with us your experiences concerning how you were approached and welcomed in the feminist community? (Probe: Were you ever excluded by the feminists in the gatherings prior to the March 8's?)

18) Do you have a relationship with the feminist organizations in Turkey? If yes, with which ones? At what levels does it move? What kind of a dialogue is this?

Let us a little uncover the concept of 'Kurdish women':

19) Who are Kurdish women?

20) Are Kurdish women a homogeneous group, or do they have their differences among themselves? If yes, in what respects a differentiation is this?

21) How do you view Kurdish woman's position in Kurdish society? (Probe: berdel, honour killings, polygamy)

22) What kind of similarities and differences do the experiences of Kurdish women have in regards to those of other women in Turkey?

23) Do you know about ÇATOM's? When were they founded? What was the aim of their establishment? Could you tell me about your opinions concerning the place which ÇATOM's occupies and the role it plays in the lives of Kurdish women?

Now let us talk about Kurdish women's groups and journals:

24) Could you tell me about Kurdish women's groups and journals?

i- When and where were they established and started to be published?

ii- Are they still active? (If not why?)

iii- Did they also have their activities in the Eastern and Southeastern Anatolian Regions of Turkey? And do they still have? If not why?

iv- According to you why did there emerge a need for these? (Probe: was there a missing or wrong approach/regulation in the Kurdish political organizations?)

25) Are you taking a part in a women's group or in a Kurdish women's group?

i- If yes, could you tell me about the goals of your group?

ii- Do you or does your group have any relationship with other Kurdish women's organizations? What kind of a relationship is this?

Now let us look at the relationship between the Kurdish movement and Kurdish feminism.

26) Can one speak of a relationship between the Kurdish movement and Kurdish feminism?

27) What kind of similarities and differences do the Kurdish movement and Kurdish feminism have in the context of the Kurdish question and the woman question?

28) According to you is there a specific issue to which the Kurdish women's struggle should give priority?

29) Is it possible to argue that the democratic solution of the Kurdish question or the coming to a halt of class society would end the oppression of Kurdish women as well? Why?

30) Did you ever undergo some sort of discrimination in the Kurdish movement due to being a woman and in the women's movement due to being a Kurd? If yes, how?

31) In which language do you comfortably speak and think?

i- Do you speak Kurdish?

ii- When did you learn?

iii- How did you learn?

iv- At what level your knowledge of Kurdish?

v- (If distant from Kurdish) How do you evaluate this situation?

vi- (To the ones who speak Kurdish and also have children) Do you speak Kurdish with your children?

vii- What do you think about Kurdish children's receiving education in their mother tongues?

32) Where do you place yourself on the political stage of Turkey?

33) What do you think about the existence of a political party which does politics on the grounds of the Kurdish ethnic/national identity?

34) Did you vote in the 2002 general deputy elections? If not, why? If yes, which party did you vote for? Why?

35) If an election were held now, which party would you vote for? Why?